



nia

BENONI  
AND SERAPTA.



65





# BENONI AND SERAPTA

•

A STORY OF THE TIME OF THE GREAT CONSTANTINE,  
FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.



...BY...

DOUGLAS VERNON.



COPIOUSLY ILLUSTRATED

...BY...

H. S. DELAY.



Be silent always, when you doubt your sense  
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence.

—POPE.



CHICAGO  
RHODES & MCCLURE PUBLISHING Co.  
1897.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1897 by

RHODES & MCCLURE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



## CONTENTS.

---

### CHAPTER.

I.	Love on the Sacred Island, - - - - -	17
	The Object and Purpose of Life, - - - -	19
	Serapta and the Holy One, - - - - -	21
	Benoni's Promise, - - - - -	24
II.	Love's Faith and Protection, - - - - -	25
	Prince Benoni and Pricens Serapta - - - -	27
	The Burning Mountain on the Sacred Island, -	29
III.	The Human Sacrifice, - - - - -	31
	Benoni and the High Priest, - - - - -	33
	Benoni and the Commander-in Chief, - - - -	34
	The Divine Intervention, - - - - -	36
	Ela, Enoah, Mosa, - - - - -	39
IV.	Searching for the Lost Prince and Serapta, -	41
	The Fair Mona and Marcel, - - - - -	43
	Emperor Constantine as a Matchmaker, -	48
	Marcel's Musings and Prayer, - - - - -	50
	The Mother's Approval, - - - - -	52
	Caius Pompora, the Rival, - - - - -	54
	Love's Confession and the Betrothal, - - - -	59
	The Empress Helena, - - - - -	61

## CHAPTER.

V.	False Love—The Serpent Enters Paradise,	-	64
	Spenata Awakens from his Slumbers,	-	65
	Angelus,	-	66
	Angelus and Serapta,	-	68
	Angelus in Love,	-	69
	The Princess and the Priest,	-	73
VI.	Durana and the Legend,	-	77
	Prince Benoni Meets the Queen of Heaven,	-	81
	Durana's Story of the Sacrifice,	-	82
	The Repartee of Queen Ivena and Costanza,	-	87
VII.	The Queen tells Her Story to Benoni,	-	89
	Looking for a Warmer Sentiment than Friendship,	-	91
	Orlando's Proposal,	-	95
	The Good and the Bad,	-	97
VIII.	The Plotting Queen,	-	104
	Love's Bombardment,	-	108
	The Priest in a New Role,	-	111
IX.	The Cunning Spenata,	-	117
	Are Marriages Made in Heaven?	-	119
	Ivena Dethroned—Costanza Crowned,	-	122
	The Jealous Orlando,	-	124
	Ivena and Benoni go to Constantinople,	-	127
	The Mystic Ring—A Base Deception,	-	129
	Schemes of the Priest,	-	130
	Ambrose—The Polemic,	-	134
X.	The Grief of Serapta,	-	139
	Love's Musings,	-	140
	Spenata Made Archbishop,	-	142
	Consecration of Bishops,	-	145
	Ivena's Love for Benoni,	-	150
	Benoni's Announcement,	-	152

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

xiii

## CHAPTER.

Love and the Stiletto,	- - - - -	153
Two Hearts Which Are One,	- - - - -	155
XI. The Affianced Plenena and Harlez,	- - - - -	157
The Wily Archbishop,	- - - - -	160
Angelus and Monica,	- - - - -	168
Betrothal of Duke Bismantua and Costanza,	- - - - -	171
The Dual Wedding,	- - - - -	172
Searching for the Abducted Princess,	- - - - -	173
XII. At the Palace of the Tombs,	- - - - -	180
Love and Strategy,	- - - - -	181
The Bear-Tamer and His Bear,	- - - - -	183
The Disguise,	- - - - -	187
Serapta's Escape from the Tombs,	- - - - -	190
XIII. The Duke's Mission to the Queen,	- - - - -	194
Serapta's Refuge — Sweet Memories,	- - - - -	197
The Keeper of the Mysteries,	- - - - -	202
Pinto, King of Sepania,	- - - - -	203
One-sided Kingly Love,	- - - - -	207
Queen Costanza's Musings,	- - - - -	210
XIV. Spenata's Search for Serapta,	- - - - -	212
Good Planos as a Religious Inquirer,	- - - - -	214
A Little Bundle of Religious Difficulties,	- - - - -	217
Applying the Thumb-Screws in the Torture Chamber,	- - - - -	220
Serapta Pursued with Bloodhounds,	- - - - -	222
The Secret Subterranean Passage-Way,	- - - - -	222
Serapta Traced to Her Place of Refuge,	- - - - -	227
Setting the Trap of Hell,	- - - - -	229
The Bloodhounds Barking at the Gate,	- - - - -	230
The Keeper of the Mysteries is Firm,	- - - - -	232
The Pursuers Fire the Gate and Enter.	- - - - -	233
Passing into the Trap of Hell,	- - - - -	235

## CHAPTER.

The Trap Sprung — Doom of the Pursuers,	236
XV. The Unbaptized Child,	237
The Bishop and His Wife,	242
Opinions, Various,	246
XVI. The Duke Interviews the Queen,	248
A Chapter of Love,	249
Caius Pompora Playing the Spy,	251
Sketch of Pompora's Life,	256
The Wicked Spenata's Deep Laid Plot,	257
Caius Becomes a Factor in the Scheme,	258
Initiation of Caius in the Chamber of Horrors,	259
The Sepulchral Surroundings,	260
The Holy Order of Ancient Druids,	262
XVII. A Dark Plot to Betray the Lovers,	267
The Plot Thickens — Fainting Costanza,	268
The Duke and the Spy — Love's Faith,	273
The Serenade — An Invitation — Stolen Package,	276
The Conspiracy Against True Love,	284
XVIII. At the Ball — The Fatal Scarf,	290
The Queen's Delirium,	291
Success Seemingly Crowns the Plot,	301
XIX. Going to Rome and Constantinople for Re- ligion,	305
The Dream of Love,	315
XX. Love Cures All Ills,	318
The Plotting Spenata and the Spy,	322
The Counter-Plotting Physician,	324
Planning for a Secret Marriage,	325
Duke Bismantua and Queen Costanza are Married,	331
A Crown and Kingdom for a Husband,	332

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

xv

## CHAPTER.

The Secret Departure — Self Exiled, - - - - -	333
Spenata is Foiled and Greatly Enraged, - - - - -	336
The Endangered Physician, Huesca, - - - - -	340
XXI. Benoni's Arrival in Constantinople, - - - - -	345
His Welcome to the Dethroned Queen, - - - - -	346
Benoni and Christmas — What the Priests Say, - - - - -	349
Ivena's Most Hearty Reception, - - - - -	354
Constantine and the Priests, - - - - -	355
Constantine and the Blushing Ivena, - - - - -	359
XXII. Constantine, the Matchmaker, - - - - -	363
His Promise to Ivena and Benoni, - - - - -	363
Preparations for War, - - - - -	365
Constantine's Thoughts and Opinions, - - - - -	367
Ivena's Love for Orlando, - - - - -	376
XXIII. Princess Serapta's Safe Arrival in Constanti- nople, - - - - -	378
The Last of Caius Pompora, - - - - -	384
Costanza and the Duke Safe in Constantinople, - - - - -	385
Marcel Seeking the Hand of Mona, - - - - -	387
Their Marriage, - - - - -	388
Marriage of Queen Ivena and Orlando, - - - - -	389
Meeting of Benoni and Serapta, and the Re- ward of Fidelity and Love, - - - - -	389



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY H. S. DE LAY.

OPPOSITE  
PAGE

Benoni Saves Serapta,	- - - - -	17
"I am Come to Console Thee,"	- - - - -	25
The two Wrestled Until They Came to the Brink,		31
Mona Gave Him Her Hand,	- - - - -	41
Spenata Awakes From His Long Slumber,	-	64
In a Room Reclined the Queen with Her Sister,		77
Her Eyes Caught the Reflection of Herself,	-	89
She was the First to Walk in the Gardens,	-	104
He Hailed Her as Queen of Savelona,	- - -	117
There She Sat in all Her Youthful Loveliness,		139
"Farewell, Ivena,"	- - - - -	157
The Sentinel Found There a Man Leading a Bear,		180
The Keeper Welcomes His Niece and Friends,	-	194
He Watched From the High Tower of the Temple,		212
She Tripped Along Gaily,	- - - - -	237
"Let Us See What This Love-Sick Maiden Says,"		248
"Thou Liest, Caius,"	- - - - -	267
"I Fear the Disease is Here,"	- - - - -	290
"Come to Me, My Love,"	- - - - -	305
The Physician Placed a Few Drops in the Goblet,		318
Benoni and Mona,	- - - - -	345
On Each Side Was a Priest,	- - - - -	363
They Saw a Huge Procession,	- - - - -	378





BENONI, BEING AN EXPERT SWIMMER, HAD BORNE SERAPTA IN HIS ARMS AND  
THUS SAVED HER. See p. 24.

# BENONI AND SERAPTA

---

A STORY OF THE TIME OF THE GREAT CONSTANTINE,  
FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

---

## CHAPTER I.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE HOLY ONES AND THE TRIALS  
OF EARTHLY LOVE.

“Benoni, dear Benoni, how can I part with you? We have been so happy on this island that I fear to send you from paradise. Yet, if you do not go, my mother will die of grief, and my father will bow his head in sorrow to the grave mourning for me.”

Thus spake a lovely woman as she sauntered by the side of a tall man in the cool of the evening as they walked together through a well-kept garden, in which were luxuriant fruits and flowers.

The breeze of the evening sighed gently through the trees, making a soft refrain to the ripple of the sea wave as it washed the silting sand on the seashore.

The birds had gone to sleep, and twilight was giving place to night, and the stars came out one by one.

“Serapta,” replied the man, “I will not leave you if you prefer I should remain. I have been so

happy that I could pass the whole of life's pilgrimage on this spot if you were here. The world is to me as nothing compared to your sweet love and company."

"Truly, Benoni, we have been happy these many years, and you have been to me as mother, father, brother and friends. Yet, I cannot forget the dear ones at home. How anxious they must have been, wondering of us."

And as the woman spake she looked across the sea, and there was a far off gaze, and a sob in her tone, as though she realized how sorrowful her friends must have been on her account.

"Ah, Serapta," replied the man, "how can I leave you alone in this deserted island? It would break my heart when I thought of the many dangers to which you would be exposed. Let me stay with you always, or else let us go together."

The woman looked up to him with fond expression, and there shone from her eyes the deepest devotion, as she replied:

"Dear Benoni, we cannot thus stay together always. I am keeping you from the busy affairs of men. Your place is near my cousin, Constantine. You must often pine to converse with your kind, and mix in the world of Roman life. No, dear Benoni, I will not longer be a drag on you to isolate you from your life and life's great work."

"And what," replied Benoni, "is my work? What is my life for? Is it not sufficient that I make you happy? I seek not for more."

Serapta looked lovingly upon Benoni, and with warmth replied:

"I know, dear Benoni, that you are most self-denying. But the world requires you. Constantine is about to change the religion of the whole earth, and you should be in Rome to aid him by your power."

"I, Dear Serapta, what can I do?" replied Benoni, "I know not the object and purpose of life. I can but say, In mystery I came; in mystery I stay, and in mystery I shall depart. Surely, I should be but a blind leader of the blind, and only speak and write in the dark."

"Say not so, dear husband. Are you not the greatest stay and support of my weak faith? What should I be without your able council? You are to me as Moses and Elijah were to the ancient people, and bring me close to Deity."

And as Serapta uttered these words, her eyes went up to the heavens, as though she uttered a prayerful thanksgiving for the gift of her beloved Benoni. He was to her as a God, and ever fondly loved her. He had saved her from a watery grave, and in return she had given him all a woman can give—a life-time devotion.

As they thus walked and talked in the garden they heard in the distance the sweet notes of a bird, borne on the gentle breeze. As they listened entranced, they thought they noticed gentle footfalls, but these gradually died away in the distance, and they saw no form approaching.

"Benoni, how sweet are these notes. It is the nightingale. Many times in my girlhood I have heard these dulcet tones amid the trees of Britain. They bring back more and more, my thoughts of home. But, Benoni, what is that reflection in the sky? Surely it must be a great fire, and it seems not so far away. I will retire into our tent

while you explore, or I will sit upon this bank, and watch for your return."

Thus desired, Benoni left and hastened forward in the direction of the fire, while she sank down on the bank and listened. But gentle sleep soon locked her in its embrace, and she saw not two figures who came and looked steadfastly on her while she slept. They moved away, and when a little distance from her, the taller one thus spake:

"Enoah, you shall stay and sing, and should she awake, speak to her. I will follow her husband and acquaint him with the will of heaven as to his life."

The words were spoken soft and low, and the men looked upon each other with loving aspect, and Enoah thus replied:

"Be it so, brother Ela, perhaps your tone is better adapted for the man, and if we were both here when she awakes, we might frighten her."

Ela strode hastily away in the direction that Benoni had taken, and Enoah began to sing. Softly the notes rose into the air and sounded like an echo of heaven's music, earthward bound.

As the tones swelled louder, Serapta awoke and listened. At first she thought it was Benoni returned, yet the singing sounded different from his voice. The moon had risen, but was hidden by a cloud. As she gazed she saw a tall and majestic form. The thicket was a background and Serapta wondered who her visitor could be. She had not, however, long for reflection, for Enoah thus spake:

"Serapta, noble Princess of noble Britain, I am come to comfort and console thee on parting with thy husband.

He has inquired of thee what his mission is in life, and thou hast ably replied. Press on, beloved of women, and encourage him to proceed to Constantine, for that emperor is truly about to change the religion of the whole earth and truth may be hidden for ages."

These words were uttered with so much sweetness, and the moon, now emerging from the clouds, showed to Serapta such a pure and noble face and form, that she felt all fear abandon her, and replied:

"Truly, my lord, I will urge him to go at once to Constantine. The truth is dear to my heart. My mother taught me from a child to love purity and truth, and live for heaven. There is, indeed, an important epoch coming. The fullness of time has arrived, and the prophecies will be fulfilled, and universal peace shall reign over all the earth."

Enoah heaved a heavy sigh, and casting his eyes heavenward, replied:

"Alas, daughter, the millenium is far distant, and unless this new religion is nipped in the bud it will lay bare the sword of persecution, and men will torture and burn and kill in the name of the dearest and sweetest of mankind, and progress will be thrown backward for centuries."

"But," replied Serapta, "if the religion of my aunt, Helena, and cousin Constantine, is to be the faith of the earth, it is a religion of love, and peace, and good will to men. The angels sang at its advent, of glad tidings of great joy, and it is the only way to heaven."

Enoah looked sorrowfully upon Serapta, and said:

"Who shall put bounds upon the love and mercy of the Almighty Father, or dare to say there is but one way

to heaven? All are His children, and He careth for each. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'"

"And do any but the pure in heart see God?" said Serapta. "But these see God in everything. Nature is to them God's revelation of Himself, and life a gift from Him to be enjoyed by all."

"Blessed art thou, Serapta, among women. Flesh and blood hath not revealed these truths unto thee, but the divine spirit of Deity hath taught the object and purpose of life. Go on, noble woman, and thy mission shall be blessed. When Benoni shall have left I will bring a kindred spirit to bear thee company. For the present, farewell!"

Serapta felt a solemn awe in the presence of the holy one, and a deep regret at the parting, and said:

"Leave me not, my lord, but await the coming of my husband. We would welcome you to our hospitality."

"I cannot stay," replied Enoah, "I have to meet my brother, Ela, who has passed forward to converse with your husband, and urge him on his mission to Constantine. Therefore, farewell."

But Serapta would not permit him to go without further enquiry, and therefore, said:

"Pardon me, my lord, but may I not ask your name, so that I may tell my husband with whom I have conversed? And also inform me how he may leave this island, where we have lived so long and happily?"

"My name," replied Enoah, "is writ deep into the history of humanity, though the record is short, 'He walked with God, and was not, for God took him.'"

Serapta looked yearningly toward the place where Enoah had stood, but a cloud o'erspreading the moon,

rendered him invisible, and as she gazed, wondering, she heard gentle singing, and knew that the holy one had disappeared in the gloom.

Thus was she gazing and listening when Benoni returned.

“What seest thou, dear Serapta?” he said, “Hast thou, too had a visitor? And has he comforted thee as Ela has consoled and cheered me?”

She rushed into his open arms, and, laying her head upon his breast, wept aloud, saying:

“Beloved Benoni, truly, we must part, but the holy one has promised to bring one of the noble women to cheer and comfort me while you are away. And what said Ela unto thee, Benoni?”

Benoni pressed his wife still closer to his heart, and showered kisses on her lips and cheek and brow, ere he replied:

“I cannot tell thee, beloved, one half of what the holy one said to me, but he reminded me of the time when he was zealous for the Lord his God, and fought strongly against idolatry, and he said unless the new religion was stemmed that it would introduce a more dangerous idolatry than ever he fought against, because it was more spiritual, and would get deeper into the minds of the people, and exercise a more lasting and baneful influence.”

At these words Serapta was greatly troubled, and looking anxiously up to her husband, said:

“What can these holy ones mean, Benoni? The religion that aunt Helena and cousin Constantine and Lactantius and Eusebius desire to promote, is the true religion. It is the advent of the Holy One promised in the

the Garden of Eden when the ancient pair fell into disobedience. This Holy One was the meekest and most loving of men. How then, can He bring war, and torture and death? He came to bring life and peace and immortality."

Benoni listened in great sadness to these questions of his wife. His strong, clear mind looked back into the past and thought of the many wars and tortures and death caused through the many religions of the earth. He thought of Cain and Abel, the first persecutor and the first martyr, and of the millions following in the track, and his heart was heavy as he replied:

"Alas, Serapta, the holy ones are much concerned at what is going on at Rome and Constantinople, and I am desired to hasten thither and express my views, and stem the onward progress of idolatry."

"And," said Serapta, "I am desired to aid your departure. Benoni, my love, my life, how can I part with thee? And, yet, heaven calls, and I must obey."

And again she wept, and clung around his neck, and her sorrow was excessive. Benoni tried to comfort her, and kissed her lovingly, and said:

"Beloved, and noblest of women, I will go as you desire, and as heaven wills. But my thoughts will ever be with you. My love will surround you, and as soon as I can, I will come and bring you unto me."

Thus the pair conversed until sleep overtook them, and for a short time they forgot their sorrow at the parting.

These two had been for a long time on the island. They were cast thither by the angry waves. A heavy storm at sea had sunk or scattered all the crew, but, Benoni, who was an expert swimmer, had borne Serapta in





"I AM COME TO CONSOLE THEE ON THE PARTING WITH THY HUSBAND."  
See p. 20.

his arms, and thus saved her from a watery grave.

They found a deserted camp and took possession, and were so happy and satisfied with their present life that they had not taken any active steps to find an escape from their isolation. Now, however, they had decided that Benoni should explore more fully the island, and ascertain a means of escape.

## CHAPTER II.

“CAN I LEAVE THEE, PARADISE!”—BENONI'S DEPARTURE.

The morning sun arose with beauty and cast its brightness over all the scenes around. The birds made the garden vocal with their melody, and the buzz of insect life, and the gentle breeze stole softly through the trees. The flowers spread forth their fragrance and beauty, and as Benoni walked forth he sang in sorrowful tones, “Can I leave thee, paradise!”

The pair sat down to their last meal with deep sadness in their hearts, for Benoni was to start in the cool of the evening.

“I wonder, Serapta,” he said, “if the holy ones will come again to give me more explicit directions as to my journey, and to bring your companion?”

“I think, Benoni, that Enoah will come to-day. I am sure he is kind and good. There was such sweet sympathy in his voice, and he will know how lonely I shall be in your absence. Ah, Benoni, were it not for the heavenly call, I could not part with you.”

“The Almighty Father will protect and keep you, dear wife,” said Benoni, with solemn utterance, casting his eyes heavenward in silent prayer.

Thus it ever is with the children of men. There is a

time in the lives of all when we realize how lonely we should be if we could not cast our eyes and minds heavenward, relying on being heard and answered.

"We will to-day ramble through the garden and fields, and enjoy the sweets of life and sympathy together," said Benoni, "and when I am away, dear Serapta, you must daily pray for me, for guidance and direction, for it is written, 'All shall be taught of God;' and I need teaching. I feel like a little child looking up to a loving father to be directed how to think and live. What a strange thing is life! To breathe, to think, to act, not knowing what is desired of us."

"But that is not your case, Benoni. I have often heard you say, 'Do justice and judgment so shall you please the Deity.' And what doth the Lord require of thee, O, man, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.' Then, as the wise man has said, 'We shall not much remember our lives, for God answereth us by the joy of our hearts.'"

Benoni looked lovingly upon the sweet and peaceful face of his wife as he replied:

"Truly, Serapta, thou hast spoken the thoughts of my mind. These are the opinions of the ancient Hebrew race, and the views of my fathers, the ancient Zoroastrians. But there has grown up amongst us certain new views, and the sin of sins is the disbelief in the Divinity of Christ. Is it not so, dear wife?

Serapta looked sorrowfully upon Benoni, and in sad tones, replied:

"That is what aunt Helena says. My mother, too, taught me that out of Christ is no salvation. Believe and be saved. Disbelieve, and perish everlastinglly."

“The mercy of Deity, dear wife, is not constrained. How can we believe if the evidence be absent? But why refer to creeds and dogmas? On this, the last day we shall be together, let us abandon such thoughts as these, and believe that God is good, and God is love.

“But,” said Serapta, “you are going to cousin Constantine to strengthen his hands in the new faith. Your life has been so pure and spotless. Your conduct so upright, just, and truthful that if you but profess the Christian faith you will add power to the new religion.

“I thank thee, Serapta, for these words of true appreciation, and am glad my life has been all you could desire, but I can only say as the Almighty inspires me, so I will speak, and I fully believe that all are taught by Him.”

“I will rely on the Almighty to teach you, dear Benoni, and on you to learn of Him.”

Thus they dismissed the discussion of creeds, and Benoni left himself in the hands of his Creator.

Benoni belonged to the ancient Parsee faith. These harmless people of whom Marcellinus wrote that they lived in safety, without fortifications, or the protection of arms, because of the reverence attached to their religion.

Benoni was a prince amongst his people, and in early life had been sent by his friends to see the Roman world. He had pushed his travels as far as Britain, and there had been welcomed by Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine the Great. It was here he met with Serapta, a daughter of a sister of Helena, the first wife of Constantine and the beloved mother of Constantine the Great.

Serapta's mother, like Helena, was deeply imbued with the new religion of Christianity. Both believed that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. That He was God, incarnate in the flesh, and that to disbelieve in His Divinity would entail eternal punishment.

Serapta had been brought up with these views from childhood, and although Prince Benoni had not accepted this faith, his life was so pure and good that her parents had assented to their union.

Immediately after their marriage they embarked for Benoni's home, but the winds were contrary, and they were wrecked, and cast upon the deserted island.

And now Benoni was to leave his beloved wife. His soul was racked with grief at the separation, but he deemed it safer to leave her in their island home than risk unknown dangers.

As the day closed, and twilight came slowly over the garden, the pair heard sweet singing in the distance. The footsteps reached the thicket, and, as the song died gently away, the voice of Enoah was heard, saying:

“Noble Serapta, behold, your sister Monica approaches. You will find in her one you may fully trust, and I, and my brother, Ela, will watch over you while your husband is away. Prince Benoni, say farewell to your wife, and come with me. I will accompany you part of your way.”

Monica bounded from the thicket and was received in the arms of Serapta. Benoni saluted her, and, then taking a lingering farewell of his wife, joined Enoah.

The pair walked hastily away in the direction of the mountain, conversing as they went.

“Saw you the burning mountain the other evening?” inquired Enoah. “It is the first time the flames have

come forth for many years. This island is called the 'Sacred Isle,' and the ignorant people believe that the lava sent forth comes straight from hell. That was the cause of the desertion of the island some years ago. Perhaps it was well this was so, for it left you and your wife a home ready provided when you were shipwrecked."

"We have, indeed, to thank the mountain, and look upon it as a friend," said Benoni.

"And are not you afraid, Benoni, of these flames supposed to come from hell?"

"There is no hell but in men's imaginations," replied Benoni, "and that you, Enoah, know right well."

"That is so, Benoni, but you must be better informed than your countrymen, the Parsees, for they believe in hell, as do all the ancient nations. The idea has taken deep root, and now runs in the blood. It is part of heredity, and must be burnt out, and it will take centuries to do it."

"Alas," said Benoni, with deep sorrow in his voice, "to think of humanity imagining such a dreadful thing of one so full of love as God. His creation reveals His watchful care on earth, and we, Parsees, can trust Him for all the rest."

"Walk with God," said Enoah, "and like me you will not be lost, for God will take you in His own good time and way. If it be His will you shall be translated to another sphere, or else in due course of nature you will fall asleep, as it is written, 'He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

"Sleep to the weary, the sad, the sorrowful, the tired child of earth," said Benoni. "His pilgrimage done, his work accomplished, the design of the Creator carried out. Thus it is with each earthly child. What the Creator

intends to do with man He will do, and no one shall say unto Him, 'What doest thou?'"

"Benoni," said Enoah, "I am glad to hear you thus speak of the great Creator. Implicit trust casts out fear. Rest assured all will be well with you here and hereafter. Press forward to Constantine, and explain to him your views. Let him not tie up the truth for ages, nor hide God's beauty in a creed. Rest assured that God is good and God is love, and hell is not. It is but the imagination of mankind, proceeding from the ignorance of the untaught as to the shape of the earth. Men know not now that the earth is round. They imagine a hollow place of darkness, scooped out beneath the world; but when they shall discover the earth is not what they think it is, and that it revolves around the sun, and when culture shall prevail, then hell will cease to trouble God's child. Yet, as the Hindoo said: 'Man must work out his own deliverance.' This is man's work in this the first stage of existence."

In such converse as this, Prince Benoni and Enoah beguiled away the night, and as the dawn appeared, Enoah, pointing out the way the Prince should take, bade him farewell, saying:

"Farewell, Benoni, beloved of the Lord, as Zoroaster said: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they are the most highly beloved of Deity.' Thus you have ever been. So continue and you need not fear what man may say or do. You are safe. You may be persecuted by men or fall gently asleep, relying confidently in the Creator that all will be well. 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.'





THE TWO WRESTLED UNTIL THEY CAME TO THE BRINK OF THE OVERHANGING  
ROCK. See p. 36.

Go in peace, brother Benoni, and trust in God for blissful immortality. Farewell!"

Thus affectionately Enoah spoke his parting words, and Benoni pressed forward until he came to the "Hill of Sacrifice," referred to by Enoah, when, being near mid-day, the Prince reclined beneath the rock which gave him shade; and so he fell asleep.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE HUMAN SACRIFICE TO APPEASE THE GODS, AND THE DELIVERANCE.

While Benoni slept, several boats landed at the foot of the "Hill of Sacrifice," and the rowers springing on the beach formed a procession from the shore to the hill, singing a solemn dirge as for the dead.

First came a dozen youths, wearing white vestinents, and carrying in their hands a branch of the sacred oak, sign of Druidism. Others followed bearing a cross, for amongst the early Aryan nations, the cross was an object of adoration.

After these came a man of tall stature. His hands and arms were fastened behind his back, and tied tightly with ropes. He was followed by a dozen spearmen of sable hue, but of great muscular strength.

After these followed a huge giant looking man, with herculean frame. He wore a white vestment on which were marked little crosses and the oak leaf, and in his girdle hung a long sacrificing knife.

He walked apart, except that near behind him came three men of fine martial appearance, and after these, the soldiers, who had acted as rowers, followed two by two.

When the Priest was approaching the Rock of Sacrifice, his attention was called to the sleeping Benoni, and a halt was called, and thus the Priest spoke:

“Arouse the sleeper, and bring him from the Rock ere he pollute it by his touch.”

One of the soldiers passed forward and awoke Benoni, saying:

“The High Priest of the Great God requires to see thee. Arise, and come with me.”

Benoni thus addressed looked in the direction indicated, and seeing the Priest walked towards him.

The Priest, observing the princely bearing of Benoni, was at first disposed to receive him courteously, but being of a jealous nature and despotic, he hastily decided to make the Prince an example of his power, and thus spoke:

“What meanest thou, O vain man, thus to sleep under the Rock of Sacrifice? Knowest thou not that the gods visit this spot, and that sinful mortals should bow only in adoration in this place? Kneel and supplicate the Great God, whose servant I am, for pardon and forgiveness.”

Benoni drew his fine figure to its fullest proportions, and looking defiance at the Priest, replied:

“I have done no wrong in sleeping here. Every spot of earth is consecrated ground, and Deity is everywhere.”

The Priest listened attentively to the words of Benoni, and noted the Prince’s clear enunciation and power of expression, and bitter hate took possession of his mind to be thus repulsed before the choristers and soldiers; and calling forward six of his guard commanded Benoni to be bound and placed by the side of the other prisoner.

This being done, the Priest with loud voice said:

“Thou art proud and arrogant, vain stranger, and

must have a lesson taught thee from heaven. The man by thy side attempted to turn the religion of our nation, and is going to be offered as a sacrifice to appease the anger of the Great God. Unless thou art prepared to ask forgiveness thou, too, shalt bear him company."

Benoni, hearing himself thus doomed to death, looked proudly forth upon the Priest, and knowing the predictions of Enoah felt himself inspired to rebel against this false faith, and thus spoke:

"I am not afraid, false Priest of a false religion, to answer thee. The God in whom I trust will deliver me out of thine hand, if such be His will. If not, thou, O Priest, but hasteneth me to glory. Lead on and see the deliverance of my God in whom I trust."

So fearlessly did Benoni speak, and such majesty sat on his manly brow, that the soldiers uttered a shout of approval. The three generals hearing this drew the Priest aside, and the foremost in command thus spake:

"Noble Priest of the Great God, we beseech of thee to spare this stranger and extend to him our hospitality. He has the bearing of a prince, and has done no intentional wrong. Command him to be unbound, and let him join the procession to the sacrifice. One sufferer is enough for one day. The Great God will be angry if we shed more innocent blood."

A deep scowl passed over the Priest's features, but the speaker was the Commander-in-Chief of the Queen's armies and possessed unlimited power. The other two chiefs also added their entreaties, and seeing that the voices of the three were against him, the Priest turned away and spoke thus aloud:

"Stranger, at the request of the Commander-in-Chief

of the Queen of Heaven, I have pardoned thy audacious act. Guards, unbind the stranger and bring him hither."

At these words there was a murmur of approval amongst the soldiers, and the guard readily advanced and unbound Benoni, and brought him to the Commander-in-Chief, who thus spake:

"Stranger, we felt that thou hadst slept under the Rock of Sacrifice inadvertently, and therefore, besought the High Priest to spare thy life. Come hither and recount to me, and the chiefs of the Queen's armies, who thou art, and whither thou art going? Then, if we can be of use to thee, thou shalt command our services."

Thus addressed, Benoni fell into rank with the three chiefs, and recounted to them on what quest he was bent, and besought their aid and direction to proceed to Rome or Constantinople. He did not mention his wife, nor where, nor how long he had dwelt on the island, and he learned that as soon as the human sacrifice was completed, they were returning to their own country..

The Commander-in-Chief listened attentively to Benoni, and then addressing him, said: •

"Prince Benoni, descendant of the noble Zoroaster, I have heard of thy peaceful race, and the regard of the nations for thy religion, and I will assist thee to rejoin thy friend Constantine, already known amongst us as a great warrior, and Emperor of the entire world. Thou may safely trust thyself to my guidance, and in token of that, we ask thee to take salt with us before the sacrifice takes place, which is not until the setting sun."

Thereupon the procession moved forward, winding around the slope of the hill, the choristers taking up the

chant, and thus continued until the summit of the hill was attained, where a halt was called, and refreshment was served around by the choristers, as this was viewed as a sacrament prior to the sacrifice. Then, as the sun sank into the west, and the twilight settled hastily over the earth, the High Priest took the logs of wood, and built an altar something like Abraham did of old when he was about to offer up his son pursuant to the command of Deity.

This being accomplished and all things made ready, the Priest took the prisoner and laid him on the altar and bound him to two huge beams in the shape of a cross, and looking heavenward, said:

“Great God of Heaven, accept this sacrifice, and let thy wrath be appeased, and give our Queen and nation prosperity.”

Thereupon Benoni stood forth and said:

“High Priest, commanders-in-chief and soldiers, let not this sacrifice proceed. The Almighty requireth not the blood of this victim to appease His anger. The prophet of old, looking upon the slaughtered cattle and slain offspring of men, exclaimed: ‘What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?’ ”

The High Priest, moved with rage, exclaimed in a loud voice:

“Accursed man, wilt thou rush upon thy doom? Guards, come forth and bind this sacrilegious being who thus dares to interrupt the sacred offering to the gods, while I apply the torch to light the sacred fire.

Benoni, standing forth, rushed towards the Priest, exclaiming:

“Away, vile Priest! Behold God’s power to stop the sacrifice.”

And as Benoni spake, the lightning flashed, and deep thunder rent the air. The Prince took advantage of the panic, and seizing the burning torch, extinguished it.

The soldiers were panic stricken, and believed in the intervention of the gods to prevent the human sacrifice.

The Priest seized Benoni, hoping, by his giant strength, to overcome the Prince, but Benoni had been accustomed from his youth, to manly games, and the two wrestled until they came to the brink of the over-hanging rock.

Here, the Priest trusted to rid himself of his antagonist by throwing Benoni over the precipice. As the two swayed and surged in the deadly encounter, and while the attention of the generals and soldiers was attracted by the contest, three tall forms emerged from the darkness and cut the cords of the man on the altar. Then rushing forward they seized the Priest and hurled him headlong over the yawning deep, and drawing their swords from the scabbards, prepared for the defence.

As the swords were unsheathed they gave forth a lurid light as though they were wielded by angelic power, and the lightning and thunder still continued. One of the aggressors, standing near the altar, called forth in clear trumpet tones:

“Children of Ham, stand away from this altar! The Great God requires this shedding of blood to cease. Behold your Priest overcome and slain! If you approach the altar your blood be on your own heads. The Great God declares that He is not pleased by this sacrifice of human life. The idea that salvation comes through the shedding of blood is an invention of mankind. The

Creator is angry! Beware! Leave the Hill of Sacrifice, and return in peace to your homes. We will attend to the Priest, and, if he lives, nurse him to health. Listen to the powerful voice of God, and leave at once."

The choristers and soldiers were greatly afraid, and the commanders-in-chief were not disposed to interfere, as the Priest's arrogant power had made him many enemies. They, therefore, permitted the opportunity to pass, and by their silence allowed the fears of the others to rule their action.

The Commander-in-Chief, who was a humane man and had been greatly averse to the human sacrifice, stood forth and said:

"Messengers of heaven and avengers of cruelty, give us the words that we shall bear to the Queen of Heaven when she asks us as to her High Priest."

"Inform her," said Ela, for it was he, "that the High Priest of the Almighty has done justice on the man who usurped the authority of heaven, and has stopped for ever human sacrifice. As I did in times gone by to the priests of the false god, Baal, I have done to this false Priest. Let the Queen make a decree forever abolishing human sacrifices. It is a mistake to say that only by the shedding of blood can man be saved. It is now, and ever has been, abhorrent to the Creator for man to shed blood to save his soul. All that the Deity requires of man is to do justice and judgment, and to extend mercy and love, one towards another."

"Truly," replied the Commander-in-Chief, "to do righteously and to love and practice mercy and truth, are before all sacrifices. And what shall be done with the prisoner and with Prince Benoni?"

“With regard to the prisoner,” replied Ela, “leave him to us; as to Prince Benoni, do thou, Commander-in-Chief, take him under thy care and direct him to Constantinople, for there he has a mission to his relative, Constantine, by courtesy called ‘the Great.’ Aid the Prince in this, and thou shalt win heaven’s approval. I know thy heart, that it is pure and true, and that thy views are far in advance of the cruelty of this age in which we live. Cultivate this true life and Deity will prosper thee. Trials thou wilt have, yet these shall but purify and raise thee nearer heaven. Thus are men’s lives on earth perfected. Duty is heaven’s noblest work, and the great and good ever follow its call. And now commanders, choristers and soldiers, farewell! Let not vain regrets follow you, for we are heaven’s messengers sent to proclaim to you a great truth, that the Deity abhors the shedding of blood to save your souls. Religion is in the daily life, and in the purity of the heart and mind. Each strive for this, and all will be well here and hereafter.”

“But,” said one of the chiefs, “is there no hell, and do we not require a Saviour from that dreadful place?”

“There is no hell,” said Ela, “it is but the imagination of mankind,—the offspring of ignorance. Hell being imaginary it has been necessary for the nations to have imaginary Saviours to save from this imagined hell. But the time will come when knowledge shall advance, and all these myths shall fade away and truth prevail.”

“Ah, would that this time would speedily arrive,” said the oldest Chief, “for as I look backward I see the world full of misery and sorrow for changing faiths and altering

creeds. The earth, gory with the blood of martyrs, calls to heaven for more light and a purer faith."

"These," said Ela, "were not martyrs to truth but martyrs to an idea. These illustrate the truth of the wise man's saying: 'God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.' Farewell, noble chiefs, and heaven send your nation greater light, and purer lives and more peace and joy."

And as Ela ceased to speak the clouds dispersed, and the moon and stars shone forth, and lit the procession to the boats, Benoni accompanying.

Ela, Enoah, and the third man, Mozah, by name, went, with the late prisoner, to the foot of the Rock, where they found the Priest laying helpless, as he had fallen. Ela applied his ear to the Priest's chest and found the heart beating feebly.

"Enoah" said Ela, "raise up the Priest gently, while I administer some of the elixir of life. We must not let his wicked soul escape to his Maker without time for repentance and amendment."

Enoah, ever ready to aid all acts of mercy and love, took the Priest gently in his arms, while Ela poured a few drops of fluid down his throat.

The effect was instantaneous. The Priest heaved a sigh, and opening his eyes, looked around, and Enoah spoke softly to him:

"High Priest, be not afraid, you are in the hands of those who will save your life if it be possible. Rest thus awhile until you feel the elixir giving you renewed life, and then we will conduct you to a place of safety and repose."

The soft tones of Enoah were soothing to the prostrate

man, although a dark scowl of hate and anger still rested on his features. He was, however, powerless and knew that resistance was hopeless.

Ere long the Priest, heaving another deep inspiration, raised himself from the breast of Enoah and said:

“Where are the generals, the choristers and soldiers? Have they left me to die, in this accursed spot, like a dog?”

Ela replied to this inquiry, saying:

“We have dismissed them to their homes stating we would nurse you to health and strength. And as we are acquainted with remedies of which these soldiers know nothing, we will soon have you well and strong.”

The Priest gnashed his teeth with rage, feeling his power over the people was gone for ever. He, however, submitted himself to the exertions of the four men to restore him, for the late prisoner was amongst the most zealous for the Priest’s recovery. The prisoner belonged to the new sect of Christians who, in this early day, knew little of creeds, but much of brotherly love and the spirit of forgiveness for injuries.

The late prisoner had come from Rome inspired by the love of souls and with an earnest desire to propagate the Christian religion amongst what were then called the heathen world,—the lost sons of Ham, a race hated because of the words of the ancient father, who, in a fit of anger, cursed his son and his descendants.

Thus curses, once uttered, tend to great wrongs, and increase as years roll on. Alas, poor human nature, when wilt thou put on the garment of wisdom and learn the beauty of brotherly love, and that the Creator has made all nations of one blood?





MONA GAVE HIM HER HAND, AND LOOKING UP TO HIM REPLIED, "I TOO  
HAVE LOVED." See p. 59.

The Priest felt the power of the draught given him by Ela, and the warm blood began to circulate more freely.

The friends, noticing this, inquired of the Priest if he could bear to be moved, and, receiving an affirmative reply, assisted him to the shore, and laid him gently down in the boat there anchored. Then they rowed swiftly away, bearing with them the Priest and the late prisoner.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GREAT CONSTANTINE, FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, TURNS MATCHMAKER.

A very different scene was taking place at Constantinople. There sat a white haired lady, of noble deportment, conversing with a man of commanding military appearance. These were the parents of Serapta, and visitors of the Lady Helena, the mother of Constantine, the Great, and in the same room sat the parents of Prince Benoni, along with Constantine.

“And you have received no tidings of your daughter and Prince Benoni?” said Helena, addressing the father of Serapta.

The one thus addressed was of noble and majestic appearance, and was king of one of the neighboring states, supported in that position by the influence of Constantine, and thus replied:

“Alas, Helena, we have had no tidings of our beloved child, except that the ship was wrecked on her way from Britain to Prince Benoni’s home.”

“And we,” said Benoni’s father, “have been equally unsuccessful in our inquiries. No tidings have come from the sea to tell us what has become of our beloved son.”

"But," said Benoni's mother, "hope still whispers that I shall yet see my son ere I depart to another world. He was such an expert swimmer that I cannot believe he was drowned."

"I, too," said Serapta's mother, "have hopes of seeing my children. I have never felt that they were dead."

"That may be so," said Constantine, "and if you desire it, I will cause inquiry to be made along the route they would take, and by this means we shall find them, if living."

"We thank you, noble Emperor," said Serapta's father. "We have already had search made at all the likely places on the route, but there is still one place where we have not explored. That is the abode of the dark race of Ham. If our children got cast in their vicinity, they would probably be made prisoners and not allowed to proceed. If, noble Emperor, you could have inquiry made there, you would confer on us a great favor."

As the friends conversed, Bishop Eusebius had come noiselessly into the room, and hearing this portion of the conversation, said:

"One of my presbytery has recently proceeded to that abandoned people. He was fired with zeal for our religion, and went boldly forth to preach to them the true faith, without a knowledge of which they must be eternally lost."

"Say not so, worthy Bishop," said Benoni's father, "the mercy of Deity is great, and how can these people be condemned for what they never hear?"

"Such is the word," said Eusebius, "the heathen are all lost whether they hear or not, for it is the belief in our religion only that can save."

“Then am I and mine all lost,” said the aged Parsee, “for although we live in this Christian world we cannot receive your faith. We believe only in the Almighty God, the Creator of all things. In Him only do we trust.”

“Then you are lost,” said Eusebius, “for out of Christ there is no salvation.”

“Say not so, brother Eusebius,” said Constantine, “these are my mother’s guests, and will be saved by a short sojourn in this sacred city.”

And here a merry twinkle was in the Emperor’s eye, and Eusebius deemed it politic not to press the theory of the heathen condemnation.

As they thus conversed, a fair girl came in and took her seat by the side of Helena. She was extremely beautiful, and health shone from her face. Her form was perfect, a depth of deep feeling rested in her blue eyes, and a calm sweetness sat on her brow.

Helena smiled lovingly upon her as the girl took her seat, and, looking towards Eusebius, said:

“Bishop, I present my niece, the fair Mona, recently come from the Isle of Britain. She is one of those beloved ones of whom the Master said, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not.’”

Eusebius looked admiringly upon the beautiful, calm features of the girl, as he replied:

“Welcome, fair Mona, to this City of God. Right glad are we to see you in our midst, and may Heaven help you.”

As he thus spake, three men came forward from the adjoining room. Two bore the priestly garb, while the third was of martial appearance. They were well known to the Emperor, who graciously took upon himself to in-

introduce them to the assembled guests, saying: "Here are my friends, Lactantius, Athanasius, and Marcel. Two are pillars of our Church, and the other is a true supporter of our Empire. Marcel, ere long, your occupation will be gone, for the people shall dwell at peace, and war shall be no more."

Marcel thus appealed to by name, looked with his frank, manly face upon the assembled company, as he replied:

"Alas, noble Emperor, I fear the day is far distant when swords will be turned into pruning hooks, and wars shall cease. Already I hear sounds of discord in the air, and religious contention over points of doctrine. The day will come, I fear, when Christians will be less tolerant than those of the religion they have superceded, and the words of the founder come true, that He came not to bring peace, but a sword. I see the blood of mankind shed by Christians who profess the doctrines of the meek and lowly One. Alas, for poor humanity, ever swayed by theories and creeds, and in the name of religion committing harsh and murderous persecutions."

The brows of the churchmen and of Helena grew dark with anger, but the Emperor only smiled as he said:

"Truly, Marcel, you have drawn a dreadful picture of horrors springing from a religion of peace and love. Yet I begin to think you may be near the truth, for I have noted that the sign, 'See how these Christians love one another,' is conspicuous by its absence, and it might as beautifully be said, 'See how these Christians hate one another.' Put away sad thoughts of theories and dogma; let us live and enjoy to-day, for to-morrow we may die."

Helena, however, was too much in earnest for her

favorite dogmas to allow these statements to remain unanswered, and casting a look of scorn on the young soldier, said:

“Marcel, we all know you are an infidel, and that you do not receive the beautiful doctrines of the Church. These might interfere with your youthful pleasures.”

Constantine, still smiling at his mother’s warm expressions of her views, said:

“Nay, dear mother, there you are in error. My friend Marcel’s conduct is above reproach. His life is noble, pure and chaste. His word reliable. His friendship beautifully sweet, passing the love of woman.”

And as Constantine spake thus feelingly he threw a loving gaze upon the beautiful and animated countenance of the young soldier, and Mona cast her eyes on Marcel with appreciation. The soldier observed the gaze, and a thrill of pleasure ran through his frame. The Emperor noticed this, and desirous of doing the soldier a good turn, introduced him specially to Mona, saying:

“Marcel, here is my fair cousin from Britain. You will find in her a true example of what a Christian can become. Mona, behold my friend, Marcel, and I hope you will be friends.”

The young people gazed admiringly upon each other, and a faint blush suffused the face of both.

“Welcome, fair lady,” said Marcel, “to Constanti-nople. The blue skies and gentle breezes of the celestial city will, I hope, make amends for the loss of your island home.”

Helena was not greatly pleased at the introduction of these young people. She intended to make Mona a devotee of the Christian faith, and was averse to Marcel’s

influence. The Empress-Mother had frequently heard Marcel express himself strongly against the Christian faith, and she desired to ground Mona in the doctrines before submitting the young girl to outside influences. Helena, therefore, addressing Mona, said:

“Come with me, Mona, as I desire to show you some relics of my journeys to the Holy Land. I think you will be interested.”

Helena took the young girl into a chapel attached to the Royal house, and there shewed her the veritable cross on which the Saviour died, and the nails and spear, along with the inscriptions written by Pilate.

“These,” said Helena, “I found on Mount Calvary, and I am about to present them to the church as soon as it is completed. Never shall I forget, Mona, the grief with which I gazed upon these relics of the suffering of the Son of God.”

Mona looked upon these things also in sorrow, but as she gazed the thought passed through her mind how unlikely that these relics should be the true cross and nails and spear, and inscriptions, and mildly said:

“Noble Empress, it is now three hundred years since these occurrences took place. Think you not that there may be some mistake about these things?”

“No,” rejoined Helena, “I was present, along with Bishop Eusebius, and saw the precious relics dug out of the soil. It is not likely such sacred things could perish. No. I fully believe that you now gaze on the cross on which the Saviour of the world was slain. And here, Mona,” continued the Empress, pointing to a crown of thorns, “is the instrument of torture that the hateful Jews placed on His divine brow, and the mantle with

which they robed Him when they called Him, in sarcasm, 'King of the Jews.'"

"Alas," said Mona, "this religion is full of strange mystery. My mother has always taught me to pray to Christ, but my faith often fails, and truly I can say with the Apostle, 'Great is the mystery of godliness.'"

"Have faith," said Helena, "and all things will be made clear to you, as it has been to me. And now, Mona, my son is the first Emperor who has embraced the Christian faith, and been born anew in Christ."

"And has the Emperor been baptized, dear Aunt?" inquired Mona.

This inquiry was a sore point with Helena. Her son had never been baptized, and he still often officiated at the pagan sacrifices; she therefore replied:

"The Emperor yet holds back from a full consecration to our holy religion, but I hope to live to see him a true son of the Church. He has done a great work for the Christian faith, and in future ages will be reverenced by the whole earth, for the day must come when this faith shall spread through all nations."

And as she spake she had a far-off look, as though she realized the greatness that the Christian religion would achieve. Then, falling before an image of the Saviour, she bowed her head in prayer, and Mona, too, joined in devotion.

Constantine and Marcel shortly afterwards took their departure together, and as they walked the Emperor spoke to the young soldier, saying:

"Marcel, your predictions for the future have recalled my private thoughts, and I fear there is great truth in

what you say of the future persecutions of Christians by Christians. I sometimes regret that I have raised up this new religion. If I had not done so, it would gradually have died out and been forgotten. But now, men are beginning to raise up a man to be a god, and to bow down and worship him. And when the Church is firmly seated she shall be cruel and turn all men to her faith. And what do we really know of the truth of Christianity?" And as the Emperor uttered these words a deep sadness overspread his features, and Marcel replied:

"Alas, noble Emperor, I foresee great trouble to the Roman world from the new faith, for already the Bishops are very overbearing and exacting. And as you say, we do not know the truth of the religion, for there is no evidence of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The writings are all silent on this stupendous event."

"And in the absence of this proof," said the Emperor, "all else is nothing, for all the religions have had re-incarnations and miracles, but no resurrection from the dead. Alas, Marcel, I do regret assisting in the spread of this new dogma which in time will be received as truth unquestioned."

Thus did this great Emperor doubt the truth of the religion he had introduced, and which in after years was to affect the progress of the whole Christian world.

"But let us leave this mournful subject," continued Constantine, "and tell me what you think of my fair cousin, Mona. Is she not very beautiful? and she is as pure as she is graceful in appearance."

"Truly, noble Emperor, she is all that is lovely," replied the young soldier, and the Emperor saw that a deep impression had been made on Marcel.

"She is the sister of my cousin, Serapta," said Constantine, "who was married to Prince Benoni, the eldest son of the King of Kirma, and they were shipwrecked on their voyage from Britain to Kirma, and have never been heard of since. I am about to send to Africa to have search made for them, and look to you to find me a suitable leader."

Marcel listened attentively to the Emperor, and as Constantine proceeded, the thought of doing a service to Mona fired the young man with zeal, and he replied:

"Gracious Emperor, if I may be so bold as to ask you to spare me, I will myself go in search of Prince Benoni and the Princess Serapta."

The Emperor looked lovingly on his young friend, and memory carried him back to his first and early love, before ambition claimed him as her prize, and Constantine replied:

"Marcel, methinks it is the love for Serapta's sister that fires your ardor. I approve of young love's sacrifices and greatly esteem your choice, and my fair cousin, Serapta, and the Prince Benoni, have my fond regard, and it shall be as you wish. But, Marcel, you will have an arduous task to win the fair Mona, for she is guarded by my mother and her mother, against the treacherous infidel."

And the Emperor smiled at the thought that the upright and truthful Marcel should be dubbed, "Infidel." Yet this has ever been the weapon of infatuation to an idea, when joined to ignorance, and Helena and Mona's mother were both saturated with the dogmas of the times.

They had never applied their reason to the doctrines, nor entered upon any investigation or research into the

evidence in support of the creeds. They believed through the heart and consulted not the intellect.

The Emperor and Marcel separated. The former to his reception of the leading men of the Empire, and the latter to prepare for his voyage, and to dwell on the fair face of Mona, and thus he mused:

“ Beloved form, the Creator’s fairest model! How grace and beauty are skillfully joined! Thus would it be with the first woman, and what marvellous skill to so form her that after ages on ages the beauty is reproduced. Truly, Almighty Creator, thou art matchless in power and design! Why dost thou hide thyself in inscrutable mystery? Wilt thou not reveal thyself to us? Teach me, Almighty Father, and guide and aid me.”

Thus prayed the infidel, from his pure conception of the Almighty, in the Creator’s great Temple, domed by heaven’s expanse, branching out into infinitude; and a sweet peace settled down into his soul.

Then he had recalled the words he had read:

“ My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

And then continuing his thoughts aloud, he said:

“ Truly thy ways, Almighty Father, are high as heaven, and that is infinitude, and thy thoughts Omnipotent and beyond our conception. Teach, Oh, teach thy little child who trusts in Thee alone.”

Thus humbly Marcel bowed to the Infinite Unknown God. He grasped his own likeness and the immense distance from himself to the Creator. True, through his travels in Egypt and the East he had learned matters in

astronomy hidden from the general populace, and believed things were not what they seemed, nor as represented. Marcel was a man in advance of his age, and this meant to be misunderstood.

Thus it has ever been. Only the few pioneers of advancement dare to think for themselves, and hear the stigma of being fools, not having the excuse of "congenital idiocy" to account for their unbelief in the Christian dogmas.

So, in the time of Constantine, men and women of the Christian faith began to look upon believers in the Almighty God yet disbelievers in the Divinity of Christ, as fools, idiots, and infidels; but this was after the joining of Church and State, and after Constantine had made twelve thousand converts in one year, bought by a piece of gold and a baptismal garment, and after the Emperor had given power to the Bishops and the Church to make the new religion popular.

Marcel, having braced his resolve by prayer, and attuned his mind by meditation on the extent and wonders of creation, returned to his home, and summoning his attendant soldier, thus addressed him:

"Alonso, be preparing my barge for a voyage. I have the Emperor's sanction to a cruise, and I shall want you and my sturdy rowers to accompany me as soon as possible. Is my mother within? If so, say I will wait upon her shortly."

Alonso, the tried veteran in many battles, looked proudly on his youthful master. He had known Marcel from boyhood and loved him as a father.

Alonso returning informed his master that the Lady Mother would see her son, and Marcel went to break the

news to her. She was a widow and Marcel was her only son, and in him all her hopes were fixed.

“ Dear mother, I come to obtain your approval to a voyage sanctioned by the Emperor.”

And Marcel kissed his mother, and she hearing his words, felt a great regret, yet said:

“ If, my son, the Emperor requires your services I cannot oppose my wishes to your duty. But remember, I am now alone, and when you are away, shall be sad and lonely. Is it duty, dear Marcel, that calls you from me ? ”

“ It is a duty I owe, dear mother, to the great brotherhood of mankind. I go to search the lost, and restore a beloved son and daughter to their beloved parents.”

“ Then it is not a public duty, dear Marcel, that calls you from your widowed mother ? ” Is there not another who can take up this matter ? The son of some other mother who has more sons than one ? May not some less precious life be risked in this search ? ”

And as the lady spoke a sob was in her throat, upward moved from a sorrowful heart.

Marcel felt acutely for his mother, but thoughts of Mona were too strong. He pictured this fair girl rewarding him with a smile of approval even ere he started on his quest, and should he prove successful, he would make her heart rejoice, for he knew how deeply she loved the missing Serapta.

Marcel had a sister, and their hearts had ever been knit together in the fondest affection. There were but these two children, and they had grown up in an atmosphere of love, and were the idols of both their parents.

Cruel war had robbed them of their father a few years

before, but the world dubbed him the martyr to duty, and crowned him with the halo of glory.

Thus, it was considered glory to die in attempting to murder others. When will the time arrive when mankind shall learn true wisdom, and when glory and renown shall follow the saving of life in lieu of its destruction?

Marcel replied to his mother's inquiries and cheered and soothed her until she gave a reluctant assent.

He also told her of Mona and how beautiful the girl was, and desired his mother to call on the Dowager-Empress.

Then, having thus arranged, Marcel called the following day upon the parents of Serapta and Benoni, and expressed his readiness to start upon the expedition.

The friends heard him with gladness, and Mona expressed her thanks. From her sweet eyes shone the warmest appreciation of his self-sacrifice, and Marcel listened, entranced with her loveliness.

"And I shall require someone well known to the Prince and Princess to identify them more readily," said Marcel. "Have you such a one who will accompany me?"

"We have here one who will bear you company," replied the King of Kirma. "He has long sorrowed for his brother, and will gladly be of your party."

The youth alluded to was of tall form and supple frame, and as the King looked towards him the young man arose and said:

"My father has expressed my fondest desire. To find my brother and sister-in-law has been my deepest wish. I thought I had explored all the likely parts, but this new idea seems probable, and I am prepared to start whenever you are ready."

And as he spake he looked towards Mona, and his gaze was yearning for her appreciation. He had long loved the fair girl, but had never received from her more than a sister's love.

He, therefore, felt keenly the approval that shone in her eyes when Marcel volunteered to go on the search for the missing ones, but he was too high a being to stoop to mean envy. If he could boldly win her love he would rejoice. If not he wished her happy in her choice.

But there was a Roman in the company who had not the dignity of soul of Benoni's brother. He looked with jealous eyes upon the scene, yet desiring to stand well with Mona offered his services to accompany Marcel.

He had noticed the position of matters between the fair girl and the brother of Prince Benoni, and was not afraid of a rival in that direction, but in Marcel, who was in high favor with the Emperor and of high standing in the city, he saw one likely to interfere with his advances for Mona's hand and fortune; for these were united in the ambitious mind of the Roman, who bore the name of Caius Pompora. He was of ancient lineage, but with reduced revenue, consequent upon reckless expenditure in times gone by, and Caius took no steps to retrench.

He would have preferred to remain in Constantinople and try his fortune with Mona, but of late he had lost much money by gambling and loose habits and believed it imperative to have an excuse for absence.

He, therefore, could pose as a self-sacrificing person while at the same time saving his reputation by letting the world know the errand on which he would travel. He therefore said:

“Sweet Mona, I will accompany the expedition and bring back your sister and brother if they are in the land of the living. If not, and I fail in the attempt, I shall at least earn the reward of a kind thought from you.”

Mona, not knowing fully the character of Caius, thanked him for the offer, and Marcel accepted his company, although not over-pleased to have such an one as Caius mixed up in the search.

It was then proposed that the friends should walk in the cool of the day through the Royal gardens, and Marcel contrived to get an interview with Mona, and the latter, looking with a glance of admiration on the fine martial bearing of the young man, said to him:

“Noble and worthy Marcel, how can I thank you for taking upon yourself this expedition in search of my beloved sister? I have often heard my friends speak of you, and I had learned to esteem your character ere I met you. Now, I know for myself how good and kind you are, and I never again shall look upon you as an infidel.”

“Fair lady, I, too, have heard your aunt speak of your worth and beauty, and I shall bear with me your kind words, and am glad to find that you do not despise the poor infidel. I would desire to hold a warmer feeling in your regard. May I hope that you will sometimes give a thought and prayer for me, for Deity must hear and answer the petition of one so pure and true as you.”

Mona looked with eyes of love upon the young man, and her heart beat in unison with the deep feeling of regard she held for him, but the word “infidel” stood forward as a barrier, and she was desirous of knowing the

grounds on which he built his unbelief in a faith she held so sweet and dear and true, and thus replied:

“I will daily pray for you and your welfare, and that you may be brought to know the beauty of religion. I have ever been taught that the Almighty hears and answers prayers addressed to Him through Christ. Surely you were thus taught in early life? How then came the change? You do not believe in the false gods, made of wood and stone? What then, noble Marcel, is your faith, and why did you change?”

The young man looked tenderly upon the one he loved, and thus replied:

“I was early trained to pray and think as you, that out of Christ was no salvation. My mother taught me when a child a song of heaven’s joys to be gained through the Saviour of the world. And I blindly received my mother’s faith, and believed it was this religion which made her so lovely and sweet to all. But when I grew to man’s estate, and looked for the reasons of the faith, I found them wanting. The great sign promised by the prototype, His resurrection from the dead, is not confirmed by any outside history, and these have now been nearly all destroyed. ‘Jesus, too, endorsed the belief in the ancient hell, and revealed nothing fresh of either heaven or hell.’ I have seen, too, how Christians have been made by purchase by the Emperor and his mother. The Emperor, too, does not really believe in the doctrines of the Church he has formed. But I shall weary you. I would prefer to talk of other things if I tire you.”

“And do you ever pray?” said Mona.

The young man looking up to heaven, answered solemnly:

“ My life is prayer, and before I began my research I had read that we should all be taught of God. I, therefore, committed my teaching to Him, and the only answer I have received is, ‘ Trust thou in God, Christ is not Divinity.’ If, then, I have received this response in answer to fervent and sincere prayer and research, am I to be lost eternally because I cannot receive Christ as God ? ”

Mona listened with wrapt attention, and a light shone on her face, for she had not before heard anyone speak like this. She felt there was the true ring of honest conviction and consistency in Marcel's voice and that thus believing, he could not act in any other way, and she replied:

“ Noble Marcel, if you have received this reply from the Almighty, you cannot receive a man as God. To you the worship of Jesus must be idolatry. Oh, would you were not going away, you could give me more fully the result of your prayerful and diligent research into these great mysteries.”

And Mona heaved a sigh of regret that she could not penetrate into the plan and design of the Creator in sending men and women into the world, and Marcel interpreted the sigh as personal to himself, and looking upon her with the fondest love, said:

“ The dogmas are not mysteries to those who will take the trouble to investigate the history of their growth. The problem of life is mysterious, but the creeds of mankind can be traced by careful research. I believe with your brother-in-law, Prince Benoni, that there is good in all religions, and that prayer is good, because what a

man prays to be, he will strive to be, and thereby answers his own prayer."

Mona replied by a trustful smile, and the young man continued:

"The Christian religion is the outcome and growth of the highest and purest thoughts of the past, and Christ is the noblest ideal man.

"Yes, Marcel, speak to me of Christ; what think you of Him?" To me His words are heavenly, and none but a God could utter them."

"There," said Marcel, "I think you are mistaken. The study of history shows that the germs of these thoughts were all in the world before Christ came. 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' This is the echo of the beautiful thoughts of Zoroaster, uttered more than a thousand years ago when he said, 'Who are those most beloved of God? Answer, the pure in heart.' The Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,' was introduced by Confucius five hundred years before Christ. And, 'return not evil for evil' is the sentiment of Plato uttered three hundred years before Jesus came. So with other thoughts of a high and beautiful character."

"And what," said Mona is your real faith? Will you not tell me so that when you are away I may dwell on these thoughts and search out the truth myself?"

The young man was drawn near to Mona by this inquiry, and said:

"Will you permit me to take your hand, for my soul goes forth to yours. I loved you ere I knew you, and now I feel there is a responsive reply in your pure and noble mind. May I call you, Mona? For I love you as

my own soul. Say, dear one, that I may hope that I love not in vain?"

Mona gave him her hand, and looking up to him replied:

"Marcel, ere I met you I had heard you described, and I, too, had loved, although I called it not by that name. But when we met my heart responded, and I felt I had found a kindred soul."

Marcel took her hand and covered it with kisses, and she, suffused with maiden blushes, looked on him with love shining from her beautiful eyes: and he, carried away with love's first delight, stole kisses from her lips, and they realized that nothing but death could part them.

"My love, my Mona," said Marcel, "I shall now go from this sunny clime feeling I leave behind one who cares for me. You have taken me, infidel as I am, for your heart tells you that I love the Great Creator and have ever tried to serve Him. I will now answer your inquiry as to my religion."

"Dear Marcel," replied the young girl, "I shall ever love you, for my heart tells me you are worthy. But as the Empress Helena and my mother will ask me as to your faith I should be glad to reply, for both often quote, 'Be not unequally yoked to an unbeliever.' What then shall I say to them, Marcel."

"You may say I am a follower of the great minds of old, and believe in an Almighty Creator. And what doth He require of me, but 'to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him?' I believe with the wise man who said: 'Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.' Like him I consider life a gift from the Creator to be enjoyed by

each earthly unit and that the spirit returns to God who gave it. I do not know the plan and design of the Creator in sending me into the world, but I trust that He will do all things well, and in His due time I shall fall asleep; and if His plan be to wake me up again, it will be for advancement and progress, not for punishment.

And as Marcel spoke, a peaceful look came over his face, and, casting his eyes upward, he continued:

“When I look upon the sun, moon, and stars I sometimes feel that these are other worlds, and that the time will come when men will discover more about them, and perhaps there are super-humans, who have inhabited this earth, now living in these worlds, and that this is but the infancy of life. Possibly we are like little children, too small, now, to have the Almighty Father’s plans and designs revealed to us, but, by and by, we shall know more.”

“I have often had similar thoughts, said Mona. “And what do you think of eternal punishment, Marcel? This appears the reason why the Saviour came.”

“The idea of a place of punishment, Mona, came down from the ancient Egyptians, and God was looked upon as the Punisher. As I have walked by the sea-shores of your island home I have seen the grains of sand innumerable. My mind has pictured a lost one doomed to eternal woe. Every million years that pass in dreadful punishment he is sent to bring a grain of sand, and then return to woe. Another million years shall pass and he comes for another grain. So millions of years shall pass and he shall carry away millions and millions of grains, but he is no nearer the end of woe. Can any one im-

agine my loving Father will permit such things as these ? The intellect, the Creator's greatest gift, answers, 'Never will the Just One do so,' and history confirms that the thought arose from ignorance. Yet, Jesus pictured this hell, and so dreadful, that even a drop of water was denied, and the rich man's petition to send to the brethren was refused. If, therefore, Christ endorsed this dreadful hell, He could not be God, for such a place is not God-like, but fiendish."

Marcel and Mona were turning into an arbor in the Royal gardens and were met at the entrance by the Empress Helena. Anger sat enthroned on her queenly brow, and she drew herself up to her greatest height, and as she looked fiercely upon Marcel, said:

"Away, gross deceiver and betrayer of innocence! Sitting in the arbor I have heard your blasphemy, and denial of hell. Think you that you know more than the learned Lactantius, the good Bishop Eusebius, or the eloquent Athanasius ? These all declare that hell is true, and that Jesus came to save men from this place of punishment."

Marcel was about to speak, but the Empress-Mother angrily continued:

" Speak not to me, rash and ignorant young man! I am filled with righteous indignation at your infidel assertions, your denial of the blessed Saviour, and your base attempt to convert my niece to your infidel views. I will report your conversation to the Emperor and he will reduce your arogant pride."

The Empress-Mother paused an instant, and Marcel spoke:

" Noble Empress, I have uttered naught that I have not

previously spoken to the Emperor. He knows my views fully, and endorses them. Entertaining these opinions he has abstained from being baptized, and has made Christianity the religion of the State, chiefly from your wish and from policy, deeming it better than the pagan faith which he found useless and dying."

"How dare you utter these views in presence of my niece?" said Helena, "she is too young to understand your sophistry."

"Yet," said Marcel, "she has been baptized and confirmed in the Christian faith. Mona professes Christianity without looking into the reasons and evidences of her faith. Thus are Christians made."

"The Church," replied the Empress-Mother, "is the true exponent of the creeds and evidences. It is not for young men and maidens to understand the mysteries of godliness. But I waste time in conversing with you. Mona, come with me. For the future, Marcel, I will take care that you hold no further converse with my niece."

"That must be decided by my parents, noble Empress," said Mona. "They permitted my sister to marry Prince Benoni and it appears to me Marcel's views are the same as my brother-in-law's opinions. Is not this so, Marcel?"

"That is so," replied the young man, looking with ardor upon the fair young girl. "I will wait upon your parents and ask for their consent to our betrothal ere I start on my voyage. Your pardon, noble Empress, if I appear unable to bow to your decision."

Helena was highly incensed and her features showed her anger, and taking the arm of Mona she conducted

the girl away, and as they left the arbor the Emperor appeared from the opposite direction, and thus accosted Marcel:

“Methinks you have had a stormy meeting, Marcel. I heard my mother rating you finely. Alas, what strong views she has on this new faith. Eusebius and his tribe have tutored her for a purpose, and made her a greater enthusiast than themselves. I often repent me that I gave the Bishops so much power. They already begin to take the sceptre from my hands, and when I die they will grasp it entirely. Then, woe to Rome and her temporal power! The Empire will be ruled by a Pope and Council, and the spiritual will supersede the earthly dominion.”

## CHAPTER V.

THE FALSE LOVE OF A FALSE PRIEST — THE SERPENT  
ENTERS PARADISE.

Whilst these scenes were going on at Constantinople, Enoah and his friends, and the missionary, Angelus, from Rome, were bearing the High Priest, Spenata, around the Sacred Island to the home of Benoni.

The motion of the vessel and the elixer gradually threw the Priest into a sound sleep, and the missionary, with true Christian forgiveness, pillow'd his enemy's head on his knees and covered him with a mantle given him by Enoah.

The three men rowed hard during the night, and as day dawned they saw the natural harbor, where Serapta and Monica were attending to their morning duties, and there cast anchor.

Taking the great form of Spenata, the three men led the way to the island home, and beckoned Angelus to follow.

They laid the Priest down in one of the tents, and thus addressed the missionary:

“Angelus, we must leave you to nurse the Priest to life, and to watch over the beloved sisters, Serapta and Monica. These are heaven's true children, and to your care we commit them. See that no harm comes to them. From you we have no fear, but Spenata is of a different mould. Should you anticipate evil, come down to the beach as the sun sinks into the west, and sound thrice with this pipe, which we will leave with you, and aid will appear. We will now apprise the women of their duty to assist in the Priest's recovery.”



SPENATA AWAKES FROM HIS LONG SLUMBER. See p. 65.



And Enoah, who was always gentle and thoughtful, went in quest of Serapta and Monica, and thus spake to them:

“Be not alarmed at my appearance. I come to bring you a work of Christian charity. A Priest has been nearly bereft of life, and there is a missionary from Rome now attending on him. The Priest will be many weeks ere he can leave this island, but gradually, with good nursing, his strength will return. Monica, I leave with you some of the wonderful elixer of life, and give it to him as need requires. Be not afraid of these men. We and heaven will watch over you. Farewell!”

And Enoah and his friends took their departure, walking forward through the island, and leaving the boat anchored in the harbor.

About mid-day, Spenata awoke from his long slumber and looking around, inquired:

“Where am I, Angelus, and what has happened?” Me thought I was in a strange land. All was dark, and I lay for days in gloom. I fancied I heard the rumbling of thunder, and, ever and anon, flashes of lightning pierced my eyes. There seemed to me no hope. Despair seized me, and I felt as though I were in the lower world, of which I had often foolishly spoken. I am, therefore, glad again to see the sunshine and hear the buzz of insect life, and feel the soft breeze, and see you near me, Angelus. But why do you not kill me? I was going to burn you, and here you are looking down upon me with love and kindness in your eyes. How is that, Angelus?”

“Our religion, Spenata, is one of forgiveness and love even to our enemies. ‘Return not evil for evil,’ is one

of our doctrines, and 'do good to them that hate and injure you,' is the saying of the Master whose servant I am."

"These ideas are all right for preaching, but not for practice, Angelus," said the Priest, with a sneer. "I have heard the Christians preach of these things, and then leave the house of prayer and deceive and rob their fellow-men. But you, Angelus, have redeemed the sect, for had I been doomed to death I should have taken the earliest opportunity of revenge."

And a hard look came into the Priest's eyes, and a demon of hate of the three generals who had permitted this misfortune to come to him, but for Angelus he entertained kind thoughts, and looked his gratitude.

"Angelus," said the Priest, "let me thank you for your care of me, for I feel indebted to you for life."

"Thank Heaven, Spenata, who has spared you to find forgiveness for your sins ere you depart to the realms of the unknown; I did but my duty."

And as Angelus spake, he looked heavenward, and his lips moved in silent prayer. But the Priest cared not for heaven, he was of the earth, and ambition was his god.

"Angelus, you know this idea of Heaven's forgiveness is all nonsense. These outward shows are but the trapplings with which we catch unwary souls and bend them to our will."

"There, Spenata, you are wrong. I fully believe in a Heaven for the good and dutiful, and a hell for the unrepentant and unbelieving."

"Surely," said the Priest, "you do not believe in that absurd place which the cunning ones of all nations invent to frighten the ignorant? There is no hell, ex-

cept the inventions of priestcraft, aided by the imagination and fears of the ignorant and foolish ones of the earth."

And the Priest looked on the missionary with a wicked sneer upon his features. He had spoken of heaven and of hell, but it was in the way of his trade as High Priest of the Queen of Heaven, and as a means to bend the populace to his will.

In this he had succeeded, for he was a giant in mind as well as body. He had early been trained in all the mysteries and subtleties of the Druid faith, and was an apt pupil and able exponent.

He had discovered this Sacred Island, and invested it with veneration as a place which the gods reserved on earth to communicate with man.

He had published the idea of the fall of man from innocence, and of the necessity of sacrifices to appease the anger of Deity, and, occasionally, as he found an enemy to his opinions he pretended that a human sacrifice was called for.

He had studied the Hebrew and Christian doctrines and knew the prevailing thought that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins.

He, therefore, dove-tailed in his system, the human sacrifices and customs of the Druids, and called from the other religions of the earth such portions as appeared, to his giant intellect, desirable to impress the people and aid his designs.

In this effort he had been most successful, and until the present misfortune all had come as he had planned, and he was virtually the Ruler of the Kingdom of Savel-

ona, a savage race of dark men, inhabiting the south of Africa.

This conversation had wearied the Priest and only a short time elapsed before he again slept.

Angelus left him in repose and walked forth into the garden. There he found seated in the shade two fair forms, and as he gazed his heart was enraptured by the sight.

Serapta, emblem of a full-blown beautiful rose, sat at the feet of one of earth's most lovely forms. Monica was conversing in a soft, low voice, and her calm face reflected the most heavenly sweetness.

They did not for sometime notice the missionary's entrance, but when they did they rose simultaneously to greet him and Monica, full of grace, extended her hand, saying:

"My brother, Enoah, has informed us of your visit and the illness of the Priest. I and my sister, the Princess Serapta, will do all we can to aid your efforts in the restoration of the sick man. How fares it with him now?"

"He is somewhat better," replied Angelus. At present he sleeps, and this of itself is well. I doubt not this fair paradise will soon restore him to his usual health and strength,"

And as the missionary spoke his eye lingered lovingly on Monica's fair face, and he heaved a sigh to think that such a companion through life was denied to him, for the Church had already began to disapprove of marriage for their priests.

Serapta, seeing the pleasing face and manners of the

missionary and how he dwelt with admiration on Monica, thus spoke to him:

“Noble missionary, welcome to our island home. I regret my husband, Prince Benoni, is not here to receive you himself, but all we can do to restore the sick man shall be done.”

The Princess and Monica were in ignorance of the faith of the Priest. Enoah had purposely left them without this knowledge, relying upon the missionary to protect them, and explain when necessary.

The women were so prepossessed in favor of Angelus that they assumed his companion would be equally satisfactory. This assumption was likely to prove unfortunate for at least one of the fair beings, and it threw them off their guard and proved disastrous.

Angelus thanked the Princess in becoming terms, and the conversation became general. The young missionary, feeling he had met with kindred spirits and that the atmosphere was laden with sanctity and purity, thus continued:

“When I look around on this fair scene, and hear the soft refrain of the gentle breeze, and the murmur of the waves washing the shore, and look up at the sky, and see everything so lovely, I feel a peace enter my soul that is truly heavenly. I have often wondered what heaven will be like, but it cannot be more beautiful and peaceful than this.”

Monica smiled approvingly on the young man as she replied:

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what is laid up for those who love purity and truth. Here we see but darkly. There, we shall behold the radiance of Deity.

Here, we know but in part. There, we shall know entirely. And there shall be no night, but all shall be light, and truth, and purity, and goodness."

And as she spake a radiant smile lit up her face as though a beam from Heaven illumed her. Every thought of her life was a foretaste of Heaven, and the atmosphere in which she lived, breathed of purity and goodness and love for all.

The missionary had never been so moved before. He had passed through the world without having his heart touched by earthly love. But now he realized the wisdom of the Creator in giving the affections, and that a woman might, in the highest sense, be a consoler in the tangled path of life.

And as Monica ceased to speak, the three beings so strangely thrown together, felt a touch of sympathy, and realized that they were of one mind, and children of the Highest.

But the missionary felt he must tear himself away from this pleasing scene and return to the Priest, and said:

"I have a duty thrown upon me and must go to the couch of him who is sick. I doubt not that he sleeps, but if I am not near him when he awakes he may imagine himself deserted and rise too hastily to search for me."

Serapta replied: "We will provide some food for both of you and bring it presently. In the meantime may we inquire your names so that we may know how to address you?"

"Mine," said the young man, "is Angelus, and I am a missionary from Rome to the Kingdom of Savelona.

My companion's name is, Spenata, and he is the High Priest of the Queen of Heaven, who rules Savelona. The accident happened to the Priest when he was about to sacrifice to Deity."

Thus shortly and simply did the missionary pass over the proposed sacrifice of his young life. But he regarded the matter from the Christian view, and that martyrdom for the faith meant a glorious and immediate crown of immortality.

When he left Rome he was prepared daily to hold his life at the mercy of those to whom he was sent, and, like the Apostles of old, was ever ready to be offered up as an evidence of his belief in the religion he went to teach.

Thus, in all ages, and for different truths, men have been ready to die, and this has tended more than everything else to spread abroad the views held by the martyrs.

Angelus found the Priest still sleeping. The young man seated himself near the couch and watched Spenata as he slept.

Gradually sleep stole over him as well as the Priest, for he had watched through the long night.

As he slept he saw a vision of Heaven, and the sweet faces of Monica and Serapta smiled him welcome there. But just as he was approaching Monica, he saw the dark form of the Priest of Savelona take her in his grasp and bear her away.

He awoke to find the gaze of the Priest fixed upon him and the forms of the women entering at the doorway.

Spenata, following the direction of the missionary's gaze, saw these beautiful faces looking upon him. In his weak state of health he could not rise from his couch, but his

eyes told his admiration, and Angelus hastened to inform him where he was, and who had brought him food.

The Priest was not averse to female loveliness, and, in early life, had been blessed by one of Eve's fairest daughters; but she had faded like a flower and left a memory only. Had she lived Spenata's life would have been very different.

"I knew," said the Priest, "that the gods visited this sacred isle, but I was not aware that it was the abode of the goddesses, and that since I was last on this spot it had been turned into a paradise."

There was a departure from the Priest's usual character. He was generally sarcastic and little given to flattery. But the surprise of seeing these fair ones, where he only expected to be nursed by the missionary, was too sudden for him to put on the armory of indifference, and their beauty of face and form was irresistible.

"Ah, noble Priest of Savelona," said Monica, "I notice you are a flatterer. Praise us not, however, until you have tasted the fruits of our garden and partaken of our hospitality. Take and eat this food which we have prepared, for Enoah told us that your strength required rebuilding."

And as she spake she spread upon the table the food prepared, and luscious grapes and apples and oranges, and pure water from the spring, with fresh milk and butter and honey.

Thus day by day went by, and Spenata increased in strength, and his health gradually returned.

He was very courteous and affable, and the missionary began to be less watchful. In fact, Angelus found the

society of Monica so pleasing that he felt the hours grow long when she was not by his side.

The Princess, noting this growing attachment, took the Priest more under her control, and conversed with him for hours. She was very winning and Spenata felt her beauty entrance his mind.

They rambled through the garden and woods together, and the Priest, who was well-read, had a copious flow of interesting conversation.

He could talk of the flowers and birds and animals and stars. He had closely studied the heavens and was far in advance in thought on the celestial bodies. He was able to calculate the eclipses of the sun and moon, and the appearance of the comets.

He had given much attention to astrology, and often surprised the dark race of Savelona by his predictions. Palmstry, too, had been a study with him, and, being a close observer of character, he had made many happy hits, and by that means had increased his power with the rough race over which his daughter ruled as Queen.

The Priest, too, had his own pet theories as to the object and purposes of life, and as to the hereafter.

He rarely spoke his private views as they would have interfered with his ambition, but now, being removed from the active working of the priesthood, he felt at liberty to present them to the Princess, and often, in the cool of the evening, these two sauntered through the grounds conversing on this great problem which has so exercised and perplexed mankind from the earliest history of the race.

"And you, too, Princess," said the Priest, "have had your mind exercised on these great problems, and I note

you have taken up the new Christian theories. But have you ever investigated the evidence for yourself? Or, are you a Christian because your mother desired you to be one, and you knew of no reason to the contrary?"

"I have ever been satisfied," replied Serapta, "with my mother's faith. It appears so natural that the Almighty, who has created us, should give us a revelation of Himself. This He has done through Jesus, His only beloved Son, who came down from Heaven and lived a life of self-sacrifice, and died to redeem us from our sins."

"But, Princess," said the Priest, "have you ever studied the history of the times in which He lived and died? There is no outside confirmation of those stupendous events which, according to some, prove Christ's Divinity without arguing."

"The miraculous birth and the angelic visitation are not proved. History is silent as to the miracles, and the greatest of all, His resurrection from the dead, is unconfirmed. This is the great sign He promised His persecutors, but He appeared not to them, and it is only since Constantine joined Christianity to the State that this faith has made any progress."

"But," said the Princess, "I go by the beautiful lives that this religion makes. It is the love of God that shines forth in the daily life."

"And are not the lives of other religionists most beautiful? Does not the love of God always make the life more perfect? Look at the Hebrews, Zoroastrians, Confucius, and followers of Guitama and Plato. How pure and noble and good are all these!"

"I am glad, noble Priest, to hear you include the Zoroastrians, for my husband was brought up in that faith,

and I know his character is beautiful and his life perfect. But now he has gone to see Constantine, the great Roman Emperor. Sent thither on a mission to prevent the further spread of idolatry."

"And is your husband now a Christian, fair Princess?"

"I hope," answered Serapta, "that he now believes the truth. He has left himself to be taught by the Almighty, and as the Christian religion is true, this must be made manifest to him, and, perhaps, even now, he is confessing that Christ is 'Lord and God.'"

Here the Priest could not repress a smile for the reasoning was so womanly, and the assumption that Christianity was the truth because it was true, was so like what he believed the logic of the sex, that he had difficulty in controlling his features.

However, he was able, after a slight pause, to resume the conversation by saying:

"If all are taught by the Almighty how comes it that some believe one thing and some another? Even the Jews, who, like all the other nations, looked for a Saviour, refused to receive Jesus as the Son of God, but crucified Him for blasphemy?"

"Alas," said the Princess, "that has ever been with me a stumbling block. They saw His daily life, heard His words, observed the manifestations at the crucifixion, and, after the lapse of years, heard He had risen from the dead, and ascended to Heaven, like Enoch and Elijah, and yet to this day the Jews refuse to accept Christ as the Son of God, and call Him blasphemer."

The Priest was about to reply to Serapta, but ere he could do so, the clouds, which had gathered rapidly,

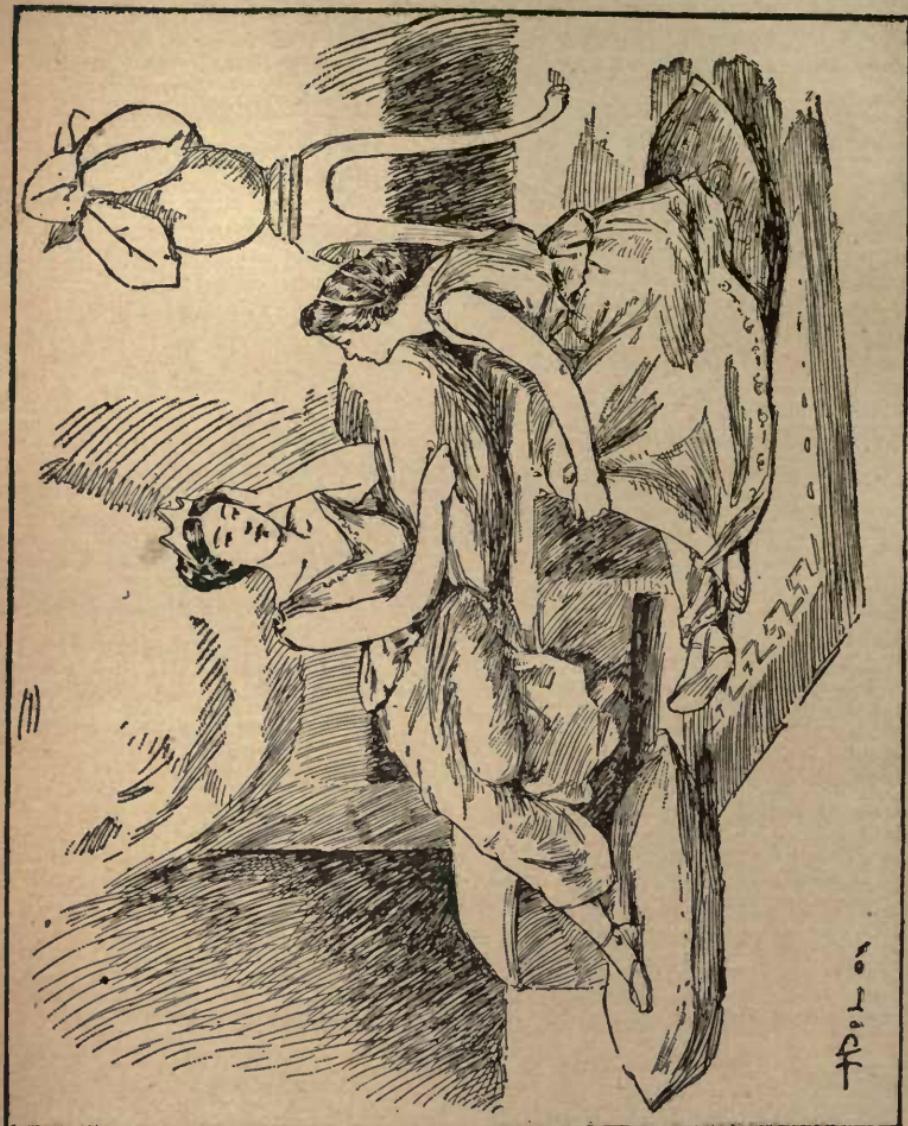
covered the land in gloom, and from the heavens came forked lightnings, thunder and rain.

The Priest and Princess hastened to the tents. Serapta was greatly terrified. She feared, in thus expressing herself, that she had offended the Deity, for she was not wholly above the superstition of the age.

But the Priest made light of the matter, and told her all could be accounted for by natural laws.

Thus the days passed, and the Priest was gradually brought near to Serapta, and his mind was weaving a web to enthrall her.





IN A ROOM HUNG AROUND WITH TAPESTRY, RECLINED THE QUEEN, WITH HER YOUNGER SISTER, PRINCESS COSTANZA. See p. 86.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN FALLS IN LOVE.

The three Commanders of the Kingdom of Savelona, Durana, Gushta, and Volva, were approaching the Sacred City where the Queen of Heaven held her court.

Benoni had been greatly interested by the beautiful country through which they passed; and the Chief, Durana, had explained to him the history of the land.

The natives claimed descent from the ancient Nimrod. The outside world stated that the inhabitants of this part of Africa were of the race of Ham.

"But," said Durana, "our people are not slaves, except to their passions and superstitions. They are a hardy race and warlike. Yet, if not molested, they care not for conquest. They are attached to their land, and the true spirit of nationality pervades the people, and so continues from generation to generation."

"I have often wondered," said Benoni, "as to the inhabitants of this part of Africa. I understood they were a race of slaves, made so by the curse of Noah."

"There is a legend," said Durana, "that the old man in his anger, after a drunken fit, had uttered a curse upon Ham and his descendants, and that a just Heaven had adopted the curse, and made them slaves. But this is only a legend made use of by the strong to oppress the weak. The Deity is too just to punish the offspring for the parents' fault."

"Think you so, Durana? and yet the most civilized nation, the Romans, have adopted the theory that all men are liable to eternal punishment because of the offence of the first pair."

"I heard this idea, Benoni, from the missionary, but it is so absurd that I could not believe it. And he stated that there was only one way of deliverance, and that was through a Man who had been crucified for stating He was a God. Really, I don't see that these civilized nations are much in advance of our own as to what the Deity requires of man. The Almighty could never take pleasure in punishing forever, or be appeased by the death of any man, however good."

"But," said Benoni, "the Christians state God Himself was crucified. How strange, God murdered to appease God, for in the Trinity all are equal."

"Then you are not a Christian?" said the Chief, with some surprise. "I thought you took the part of Angelus because you were of his faith."

"I am a follower of Zoroaster," said Benoni. "I think of God as the Universal Spring of all human actions; and, as I cannot see the great design of creation in all its parts, I am prepared to leave myself fearlessly and unreservedly in His hands, feeling certain that whatever may be His intentions regarding my present and future destination, they will be right, and that I cannot alter them in any way."

"Surely," said the Chief, "this is the true religion. I have long entertained this view, and was averse to human sacrifices. If the priests think well to receive offerings of cattle, and doves, and birds, and play at appeasing Heaven's anger by sacrificing these, and afterwards eating them, I do not think it so bad, for all men must live, and this is their mode of livelihood. Yet I think these practices savor of superstition, and are the relics of idolatry."

"These ideas of sacrifices," said Benoni, "are the growth of ages. Zoroaster claimed to converse with Deity on the mountain, and there were thunderings and lightnings and fire. He had miracles and temptations and overcame the Evil One. Zoroaster came down from heaven, and at the age of thirty began his ministry. Upon these statements, and the growth of thought of all the nations, the Romans have built up a more spiritual conception, and made one sacrifice appease for all. There had been tinkering enough through the incarnations of Horus and Mithra and the Virgin mothers, and all these the Romans have rolled into one, and called it Christianity."

Thus conversed the descendants of Nimrod and Zoroaster, and as they emerged from the valley and reached the summit of the hill they saw across the plain the sacred Savelona.

The sun shone upon the city, and the palace, which stood on the highest point of the hill, sparkled in the sunshine, and was reflected in the lake at its base.

There were trees growing on the ascent, and their fragrance was wafted by the wind to the travellers.

As the cavalcade reached the top of the hill they heard the sound of a royal salute, and the choristers commenced to sing as they were wont to do when returning from the sacrifices.

But the faces of the generals became overcast. They realized that they would have to explain to the Queen the absence of her father, the High Priest, and the omission of the sacrifice.

Benoni noted this change in his companions and en-

deavored to divert their attention by inquiries about the Queen, the city, and the palace and grounds.

But he only partially succeeded, and when the Chiefs, saw the royal barge leave the opposite side of the lake, they called a halt, and formed a circle to receive their Royal Mistress.

In the centre stood the Royal Oak, at the foot of which was a rustic seat called by courtesy, "The Royal Throne."

Around this throne assembled the citizens and soldiers, and as the Queen stepped on shore, assisted by the Commander-in-Chief, they raised a shout, " Long live the Queen."

Durana conducted the Royal Mistress to the rustic throne. Then, making a low obeisance, awaited her commands.

"I do not observe," said Her Majesty, "my noble father, the High Priest of Savelona. I trust no harm has come to him through this sacrifice. Have the gods appeared and detained him for further revelations?"

A close observer might have noticed a vein of sarcasm in this inquiry. The Queen knew her father too well to expect Heaven to reveal anything to him.

Durana took advantage of this mode of question, and turned it to his purpose, as he replied:

"Most noble Queen of Heaven, the gods have indeed appeared and revealed their will. This is, that human sacrifices are forever to cease throughout your dominions, and your Majesty is to make a decree, unalterable, that from henceforth no blood is to be shed to appease the wrath of Heaven. This has been all a mistake arising

through man's ignorance and fears and perverted imagination."

"I have long been averse to the shedding of blood," said the Queen, "but my father, urged by the people, would have it so. But whom have you here, Durana? Methinks he has the bearing of a king. Came he down from heaven with the gods?"

Thus the Queen spoke, looking with admiration upon the fine face and figure of Benoni.

Durana was greatly relieved that the Queen's attention was diverted from the occurrences on the Sacred Island, and also gratified that the Prince should have found favor in her eyes, and the Commander-in-Chief thus replied:

"Permit me, your Majesty, to present Prince Benoni, son of the King of Kirma. He was shipwrecked on the Sacred Island, and is on his way to Constantine, the Emperor of the great Roman world. The gods committed him to my care to be directed to Constantinople."

"Could not the gods themselves conduct the Prince?" smilingly inquired the Queen. "However we must not expect too much from Heaven. We appear left a good deal to ourselves. Therefore, Prince Benoni, I welcome you to my palace. Durana shall find you a suite of rooms, and you must make a stay with us and see our kingdom. Commander, I will hear you further in private as to your mission."

Thus saying, the Queen rose from the throne, and Durana conducted her to her barge amidst the sound of sweet music, and she was rowed across the lake, Benoni, with the three chiefs, choristers and waiters, following in their wake.

As soon as Durana could be spared from attendance on the Queen he came to Benoni and escorted him to the rooms set apart for him in the palace.

A sadness still hovered around the Commander for he was afraid of the private audience and the Queen's anger, and delayed the communication as long as possible.

"Alas," he mused, "what a strange thing is life! Here am I wondering the effect of my conduct on the Sacred Island. When there it appeared natural as I felt sure that the Priest must be dead. And I listened to the holy ones and left him to their mercy. We are all tinged with superstition and the slightest thing will turn the scale of judgment where visitors from the Higher Sphere are concerned."

The Commander's musings were shortened by a request from the Queen for Durana to attend her in the private audience room.

"And now, Durana," said the Queen, "let me hear of the sacrifice, and what detains my father."

And the Commander noticed that as she spake all left her presence, and he found himself alone with her Majesty, and Durana replied:

"All went well, your Majesty, until the moment came to offer up the sacrifice. Your father had bound the missionary to the altar, and had offered the dedicatory prayer, and was about to apply the torch, when Prince Benoni stood forth and pleaded for the missionary's life, stating that the Almighty God of Heaven and earth required not such sacrifices, but only that men should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before the Deity. This angered your father and he commanded the Prince to be bound. But ere the soldiers could do this, the

Prince, looking up to heaven, called forth the Majesty of Deity to stop the sacrifice, and the lightning came forth instantly, and fearful thunder rent the air, and the torch was extinguished, and all became dark. There was a wrestling and the Priest tried to force the Prince over the summit of the Rock. But amid the panic came three holy ones, and with swords, flaming with Heaven's wrath, they cut the cords from the altar and released the sacrifice, and seizing the Priest hurled him from the Rock of Sacrifice."

"And is my father dead?" inquired the Queen.

"I fail to see how it can be otherwise, as the Rock is very high. But the three holy ones commanded all to stand away from the altar, and then, in a voice of majesty, one of the holy visitors commanded all human sacrifices to cease, and sent the celestial message to your Majesty, and commanded us to depart in peace, and stated they would attend to your father."

"And did you leave him in their care?" inquired the Queen, "and that without ascertaining whether he lived, or was really dead? Methinks, Commander-in-Chief, you were remiss in your duties, and that it would have been more humane to have at least brought him to the palace so that we could have had him royally attended to. And is this all you have to tell me?"

"This is all, your Majesty, and had you been present and seen the awe inspired by the intervention of the holy ones, and how all the soldiers trembled and were afraid, methinks you would not censure me, but admit I could not have acted otherwise."

"I would be alone," said the Queen, "but do not leave the palace."

And thus speaking she retired into her private chamber, and Durana left the reception room and rejoined Benoni to whom he recounted all the particulars of the interview with the Queen.

The Prince expressed regret if anything he had done should affect his friend's military power, but Durana stopped him, and replied:

"I am too old a servant of the State and have too much influence with the soldiers to fear anything the Queen may do in the absence of her father. Besides, of late, I have fancied a coolness between the Queen and the Priest. He has desired to rule the kingdom through her majesty, while she, woman-like, was reluctant to give away her power. Therefore, his absence will leave her in undisputed sway."

"This may be as you say, Durana, and in any case I hope you will not suffer for allowing your influence in the scale of mercy."

Thus the friends conversed, and the Commander-in-Chief sent for his son, and introduced him to Benoni.

This was a young man of military appearance and enormous strength. He bore the name of Orlando and was in high favor with the Queen. Many thought he would be Prince Consort, and this might have been but for the Priest whose jealousy and desire for power made him oppose the alliance.

He received Benoni with pleasure and conversed freely on the countries where the Prince had travelled, and his young mind took in the great advantages that Benoni had received by such a wide experience of men and manners.

"We will do our best, noble Prince," said Orlando,

"to make your stay with us agreeable. If you are fond of hunting we can give you adventures of this kind, for in the mountains there are bears and other large game."

"I thank you," replied Benoni, "but my stay in this country must be of short duration as I desire to reach Constantinople without delay."

"That is a city recently laid out by the Emperor Constantine, is it not?" asked Orlando.

"That is so," replied Benoni, "and the Emperor has embellished it with all that modern talent can supply, and in future ages it will stand forth as the City of Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor."

"But, noble Prince," said Orlando, "the missionary, Angelus, came from Rome. We understood that city was the seat of the Roman Empire and the home of the new faith."

"The new religion no doubt sprang from Rome," replied Benoni, "but at present the real capital of the Empire is Constantinople. There I expect to find Constantine and my friends."

"Then are you a Christian?" inquired Orlando.

"I believe," replied the Prince, "in the beautiful sentiments said to have been uttered by the founder, but I do not believe in His Divinity. He is portrayed as the greatest man that ever lived, and truly I believe that His mind was pure and beautiful. He was the heir of all the past ages, and his grasp of mind enabled Him to make these noble thoughts his own. But now the Roman world are about to make him a god and usher in a spiritual idolatry."

"This," replied Orlando, "agrees with what the missionary stated. But Spenata would not let him preach

this new doctrine. The Priest said it was not true, and that Deity had not revealed Himself as man on earth. I conversed frequently with Angelus in private yet I was not impressed with what the missionary said. It only appeared a repetition of previous incarnations and saviours with slight alterations, to make it go forth to the people as a new revelation."

"You did well," replied Benoni, "to hold back your faith until you had searched deeply into these things. By and by, there will come the time when people will receive this faith without inquiry. But our age is the period when the evidences must be looked for. This, however, mankind will not do. All the world are weary of looking into the great mysteries of religion."

"But," said Orlando, "if the religions of the earth produce good and noble lives why not let it spread?"

"Because, ere long, Orlando, it will become mixed up with creeds and dogmas and forms and ceremonies, and these will be taken as religion. But religion is in the daily life and not in creeds or forms. Besides truth is sacred, and good can never permanently come from evil."

Thus the young men conversed until the Commander-in-Chief came to call his son away to duties in the palace.

A very different scene was taking place in another part of the palace.

In a room, hung around with tapestry, reclined the Queen, with her younger sister, Princess Costanza. They were conversing on the events of the last few days.

"It is no doubt very sad," said the Queen, "that our father has come to such an untimely end, but I do not see what we can do about the matter except to send and

ascertain for certain whether our father was really killed."

The younger sister looked perplexed, but she generally gave into the Queen, and, therefore, replied:

"Ivena, you will know the best what to do. Yet, I think, that the generals could not well have done otherwise than as they did, especially if the gods did really come down to earth to stop the sacrifice. It is a judgment on our father, sent direct from Heaven, and we must bow with submission."

Thus the Princess showed that she was a child of superstition and believed the gods had intervened to stop the further shedding of blood.

"But," Costanza continued, "tell me of the Prince Benoni. I hear he is truly beautiful, and as noble in mind as form. I hope he will stay with us for I am often dull, and one who has travelled so much must have many adventures to relate."

"Costanza, you are always wanting to hear thrilling stories. I believe you dream of love and princes and martial glory. When the real prince comes, my little sister will take wings and fly away, and I shall remain the virgin Queen of these rough, warlike people."

"Nay, Ivena, you need not feel alone. The noble Orlando is ready to fall down and worship you. He, too, is beautiful as the gods, and far more substantial and real. My sister will console her solitude by making him a sharer in her throne."

"Go away, vain sister," jocosely said the Queen smiling, "you are too young to mix in the affairs of the heart and State. Methinks Orlando would suit you better than myself. I must have a master, not a slave to fall down and worship me. If I love, Costanza, it will

be with all the fire of my Spanish blood, and I shall worship him."

And the Queen had a far-off look as though she was dwelling on her thought and picturing the ideal of the one who would subdue and take possession of her virgin soul.

Truly he would not have to be an ordinary mortal. He must be one to subdue and compel her to esteem and love, before he could gain the citidal of her deep affection. But as she thought of the Prince Benoni her eyes assumed a softer gaze, and she heard again the sweet tones of his voice speaking to her.

"I must away, Costanza; affairs of State demand my attention. I will pardon Durana as you suggest."

And the Queen kissed her sister, and the Princess noted a soft, languishing look in her dark eyes which she rarely saw there.

When the Queen had retired, the Princess sat and mused:

"I wonder as to this Prince from the Sacred Isle. My sister may say what she pleases, but I know she is already half in love with him. Ah, when shall I have some one to love poor me ? "





AS SHE MUSED HER EYES CAUGHT THE REFLECTION OF HERSELF IN THE  
MIRROR. See p. 91.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE QUEEN LANGUISHES FOR LOVE.

Thus the weeks went on, and the Queen did not assent to Benoni starting on his journey. She often conversed with him, inquiring as to his travels. He had been in Spain, and Ivena had a dim recollection of that country, and of a devoted mother, who loved to ramble with her on the sea-coast and help her to gather shells.

He also spoke of Britain, and it was here that Ivena had met with her first great sorrow, the loss of a mother. She compared this island, even then noted for its dampness and fogs, with sunny Spain, and with the blue skies of Savelona.

“I remember well,” said the Queen, “my father coming to this country. The people had just lost their King, who was also their High Priest, and left no heir to succeed him. My father came forward, and, possessing eloquence and an acquaintance with the mysteries of Druidism, impressed the native population with his divine power, and they besought him to be their King. This, however, he declined, stating that the Priest’s kingdom was not of this world but of heaven. His refusal raised him higher in the esteem of the people, when, therefore, he suggested me as the Queen. I was received with loud acclamation. I was crowned ‘Queen of Heaven,’ and my father was appointed High Priest. Thus, noble Prince, you find me reigning here by the supreme wish of the people, and now my father is dead. I am greatly troubled as to the religion of this kingdom. I am daily besought to supply another High Priest from

amongst the priesthood, but I hold not with the religion of this land."

"What then, noble Queen, is your faith?" inquired Benoni. "Have you some theories of your own? What think you shall fit mankind for the next stage of existence, if there be one?"

"That there is another life I fully believe. If this life were all of existence, I should believe it an abortion, a something unworthy the skill of the Great Creator. We all yearn to live again. The thought of annihilation is shocking to us all. Yet that were better than the hell pictured by the different religions of the earth."

"Then," said Benoni, "you do not believe in hell?"

"Certainly not," said the Queen. "I believe if the Creator awakes me from sleep it will be for progress and advancement, not for everlasting punishment. Does your nation, noble Prince, believe in immortality?"

"Ever since the time of Zoroaster, when he stated he had conversed with Deity," said the Prince, "our people have fully believed in the immortality of the soul."

"And do the Parsees, like the Christians, believe in the necessity of a Saviour?" inquired the Queen.

"My people," replied Benoni, "believe there will be a Saviour, to fight against and overcome the Evil One, and restore the golden age of innocence. But this is the prevalent opinion of all the nations. The distinction is that the saviour is to come from each nation and not one for all the world as claimed by the Christians."

"Oh, these saviours!" excitedly said the Queen. "I am mystified by the many saviours, the many gods, the many faiths! At times I am ready to abandon all,

wondering what this life is really for. The feeling I think must come over all of us at times. Why was I born! why do I live! whither am I going?"

"And the only answer we obtain," said Benoni, "is that we must trust the Creator. The cultured of our race do not believe that Zoroaster talked with Deity. I do not believe that anyone has ever seen the Almighty. These appear our infant days, when we are only taking an elementary lesson of life, and we are as yet too little to have any great revelation. And not knowing the design and plan of the Architect of the Universe we make guesses in the dark. We can only trust and hope."

And as Benoni uttered these words in a solemn and reverent tone there appeared a stillness in the air, and to the souls of each came a soft echo, "Trust and hope," and this is all that little man can do.

In conversations such as these the minds of the Queen and Prince were drawn near together, and the Queen, not knowing of any impediment, began to look for a warmer sentiment than friendship, but she looked in vain.

"How dearly I could love thee, O, Benoni!" mused the Queen, when the Prince had departed. "Long have I yearned for a kindred soul. And thou, Prince, noble in form and mind, art my ideal of a man. And hast thou not, my love, one fond thought for me?"

And as she mused her eyes caught the reflection of herself in the mirror, and she continued:

"If thou, Benoni, art fond of dark beauty, methinks I can please thee. But, alas, men ever choose their opposite. And thou, Benoni, art dark. Perhaps my sister may take thy fancy. But what fantasies are these,

born of idleness and desire! The Prince may already have chosen from his own land, or the Roman world, or some fair Britain. Would I could ask him."

And as the Queen mused a soft expression stole over her face and love took possession of her soul. This Prince had come so unexpectedly. He talked so sweetly. He was so much her ideal that she longed to claim him as her very own.

But her solitude was interrupted by an attendant announcing the two Chiefs, Gushta and Volva, and the former addressed the Queen:

" May it please your Majesty, we come again on this important matter, the choosing of the High Priest which can no longer be delayed. The people and the priests are getting furious. Will not your Majesty appoint another to be High Priest in lieu of your deceased parent ? "

" I am weary," said the Queen, " with this cry for another enslaver of the people. What is priestcraft, but another name for slavery ? " Do the people want to pray ? " Let them cast their eyes upward to the open vault of heaven, and raise their petitions to Deity direct. Religion is a personal matter between each child of earth and their Creator. Why, then, should men desire to approach the Almighty by deputy ? " Inform the people that they are free to pray to God direct, and let each father be the High Priest to his own infant offspring. More is not required. We have each to answer for ourselves, and another cannot reply for us."

" These ideas, your Majesty," replied Volva, " are truly beautiful for private life, but will not answer in governing the people. The cultured may have an

abstract god, and abandon forms and ceremonies, but the common people must have creeds and forms and priestly direction."

"If matters were clearly explained to the people," said the Queen, "and they were told that they could pray direct to Deity, and need not be taxed to maintain the priesthood, nor offer up their first born to save their souls, they would rejoice and thank you for this freedom. Let a meeting be called and explain my views and wishes. Other nations are changing their faith, why not Savelona? Constantine has discovered that the old pagan faiths are dead and is introducing a new God, yet what is it but a new spiritual idolatry! The worshiping of a man as Deity, and the setting up on high of a woman as the Holy Mother of God. Let us abandon all these relics of the past and worship the Creator only."

These sentiments of the Queen were very startling to the two Chiefs and their countenances were troubled. At last Gushta replied:

"May it please your Majesty, let your servant speak and be not offended. It was the religion of your father that raised you to the throne. Take away this religion and the divine right of kings to govern is gone. Are you prepared to abdicate? If so, this is the way to bring it about, for without religion the Queen's influence falls. She reigns only as the 'Queen of Heaven.'"

"I thank thee, noble Gushta, for thy plainness of speech. I know thy worth and devotion to my throne. Yet, I am prepared to put my opinions to the test. Let a great assembly be called, and in the meantime I propose to take a journey to the mountains of Sordello, but will return for the assembly. I will explain my

wishes to my people, and I should also desire them to hear what Prince Benoni, the Zoroastrian, has to tell respecting his own nation, who live in peace with all because of the reverence for their religion."

The Chiefs, noticing the firmness of her Majesty, expressed that they would call the meeting.

"But," added Volva, "it will be dangerous to permit the Prince to address the people, for the priests will be there and they naturally will object to have their livelihoods taken from them."

"Why," replied the Queen, "should the people have such burdens placed upon them as to support the priests?"

"By the same reasoning," said Volva. "why should the people be taxed to support royalty?"

"There you are in the right, Volva. The King and the Priest must stand or fall together. They hold together now. Take away priestcraft, and kingcraft goes with it. I am, however, prepared for the die. I will rule so long only as the people desire it."

Here an interruption came by the court attendant announcing Orlando, who desired audience of the Queen.

"Let him be admitted," said the Queen, "and you, my good friends, hesitate not to call the assembly. Farewell for the present."

Orlando approached the Queen, and, making a low obeisance, kissed her hand.

"To what, Orlando," said the Queen, "am I indebted for a visit? Methinks I have not seen you at the palace much of late."

Orlando looked reproachfully on the Queen as he replied:

“Has your Majesty missed me from the court? I thought you had eyes and ears for no one now except the Parsee Prince. He being here, all old friends might go. Thus, Ivena, I expected not to be so slighted, for I loved you truly.”

“And as a sister I love you, Orlando. Why, therefore, should you object if I accept the Prince as my friend? Besides, I may soon be poor and without a kingdom to share with any one. If trouble and sorrow come, Orlando, could you love and aid me then? I am sad to-day, and I see sorrow coming towards me. Say, Orlando, could you love me for myself alone?”

“Noble Ivena, it is not your kingdom or crown I crave. It is that richer jewel, your heart’s warm affection. Give me that and let the kingdom go. In trouble or sorrow appeal to me and let my conduct show how truly I love you.”

“Be it so, Orlando. At present I possess but a sister’s love, but, if you are tried and come forth a conqueror, esteem may grow into love. I shall put you to the test. I am about to go to the Gardens of Sordello, there to enjoy the calm of meditation and the beauties of nature. On my return I meet my people and offer them a free faith and direct access to Deity, no priests intervening. It may result in my downfall; can you aid my cause while I am away and love me if I fail?”

“Ivena, I dedicate my life to you. I love you alone and, therefore, do with me as seemeth good to you. And if your people forsake you, allow me and my love to comfort and console you.”

"Orlando, you give me hope that amongst my courtiers none are more genuine than you, and I can only love nobility of mind. Be this, and it will prove its own reward even if I am unable to give you what you now desire. Farewell, Orlando, and may High Heaven direct and guide both of us into a haven of peace and rest."

"Thus saying the Queen extended her hand graciously to the young Chief, and he led her from the room, and, as she disappeared from view, the light of life went out for him.

#### THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

While these matters were going on at the palace, events were not at rest on the Sacred Island. The Priest had recovered his health and strength, and his plotting mind had resumed the weaving of the web of destiny.

The holy calm of nature, and the pure utterances of Monica and Serapta, had for a time exercised a peaceful calm on his troubled mind. But as his strength returned and his mind dwelt moodily upon the past, he felt his anger moved by the neglect of the Queen and Durana.

He realized how soon a man may be forgotten. It was but as yesterday when he was of supreme power and his word was law throughout the Kingdom of Savelona. Now, he was a nonentity, a cipher blotted out of existence, and none sent to inquire whether he was alive or dead.

These thoughts galled and angered him, and he vowed revenge deep and dire. He included Benoni if still within the realm, and in any case he determined to reach the Prince through Serapta.

But she was pure and true and he made only slight

headway in his advances. As a friend she would converse with him on any subject, yet if he infused too warm a tone, or approached her by flattery, he was at once firmly repulsed.

This, however, only led him on to the attack and gave increased zest to the pursuit.

But with Monica and the missionary, matters were very different. The daily exchange of thought, the secluded walks, amid the high and holy influences of nature, all tended to bring their minds into unison.

When, therefore, the pair sat in the shade on a mossy bank, and watched the gentle ripple of the wave, and heard the soft breathing of the wind through the trees, no wonder that Angelus and Monica breathed soft vows of everlasting constancy and ardent love.

“Monica, how sweet and beautiful is life now I have found you, my kindred soul!” said Angelus, as he drew the maiden near to his heart, and imprinted kisses on her brow and lips, and continued: “The Deity meant us for love and each other. Until I met you I deemed it sinful to think of marriage, but now I feel this is the plan of the Creator to preserve life upon the earth, and that to refuse marriage is sinful.”

Thus the missionary reasoned from a new standpoint. The priests in Rome had began already to look upon earthly love as sinful in one set apart for religion. They had reasoned without knowledge, and the beauty and purity of Monica had banished sophistry from Angelus.

“Dear Monica, you have made a complete revolution in my heart and mind. When I look back upon the past, and think of my foolish views of life, I am surprised that I could ever believe it sinful in me to love one so pure as

you. Truly, the Creator knew what was for the good of man when he formed woman. What is there equal to true, pure love? We shall both be help-meets in the path of life, rough-tangled though it be. Shall not this be so, my Monica?"

"Angelus," said Monica, and the words were breathed low and soft, "you know how dearly I love you. We are kindred souls, and Heaven unites our vows and blesses them."

"We are but one, be that the bond  
To hold us till we die;  
Shoulder to shoulder let us stand  
'Till side by side we lie."

"And then," said Angelus, "such love as ours shall live beyond the grave. Our yearnings for unity of soul can never be fully realized until the garment of mortality shall give place to the light and radiance of immortality."

Thus the pair were in paradise, and the birds sang the betrothal hymn, and all nature smiled a benediction on their happy love.

But alas, such days as these cannot last forever. Monica had duties, and Angelus had calls and responsibilities. The mortal love had not quenched the missionary zeal, and he yearned to return to his self-allotted labors. But he was not to go alone. Monica was to share his weal or woe, and help him in his duties.

He believed the Priest was not now averse to the spread of Christianity. True, Spenata, had not expressed belief in the doctrines, but, as the Priest's own dogmas had received such a shock on the Rock of Sacrifice, he was disposed to try a change of religion, and as well Christianity as Druidism, if the populace accepted it.

To Serapta, the truth or falsity of a faith did not weigh with him. Expediency was his war-cry, and ambition was his god. For this end he would sweep all before him and spread doctrines true or false.

Angelus did not like to take any steps to leave the island without communicating with Enoah and his companions. He, therefore, took his pipe and sounded the notes for communication. Three separate days the missionary attended at the place and time appointed, but no one appeared.

Spenata had watched the missionary and heard the pipe and noted that it was sounded each time at the same place and hour, and being accustomed to signals the Priest decided to speak to Angelus.

"Well, worthy missionary, what means this systematic piping at this same hour? Are you calling forth the mermaids to have a gambol by the light of the silvery moon? Or, are you piping for the three holy ones to come and direct you as to your return to Savelona?"

The Priest had noted closely the bearing of the conversation and made a shrewed guess that Angelus would not desire to leave without seeing these holy ones again.

As Spenata thought of them he ground his teeth with rage, feeling that they were the causes of his downfall.

But they came not, and Angelus grew sad, pining for action.

Spenata rallied him, and said: "Pipe away, let the sounds be louder. Perhaps the holy ones are sleeping, or taking a journey. They will be sure to come if you pipe loud and long enough. Heaven always answers though it may be slowly. It is but to try your faith, and

in the end the oracle speaks, and you must guess its meaning."

Thus sneeringly spake the Priest, and the missionary wondered why the holy ones did not appear. He even thought it might be because the Priest was near, and Angelus tried to go down to the appointed place alone, but when he looked around Spenata stood before him.

Thus the good and bad in this world are mixed, and men possess not the good because evil is present and near them. Thus men think and limit the power of the Holy One of Heaven; the Creator of all things.

"Well, Angelus," said the Priest, "I see you are sad that your directors and guides do not appear. Know you who they are?"

"I only know," replied the missionary, "that they are called Enoah, Moza, and Ela, and that they are servants and messengers of The Most High, and ever do His will."

"These men profess to be Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, returned to earth. Yet how they hide themselves from men. Why do they not come and unfold to us the mysteries of the other world? Mankind for centuries have yearned to know the mysteries of life and what death reveals. The why and wherefore of this teeming life which comes and goes upon the stage and frits its little span and then sinks into dark oblivion. But, alas, men yearn in vain! Even gods are stated to have come down from heaven, and men are said to have conversed with Deity face to face, but what know we now more than our fathers? We know we live and believe we must die, but nothing more. Let the three holy ones come and reveal to us the object and purpose of life, and explain to us the plan and design of the Creator in sending life upon the

earth, for at present men know nothing about these things, nor of the Hereafter."

"Spenata," said the missionary, looking sorrowfully upon the Priest, "there has been one revelation that none can gainsay. Deity came down from Heaven, and lived among men, and unfolded to them the mysteries of life and death."

"And what did he disclose that was not in the world before?" replied the Priest. "And when Moses and Elias appeared on the Mount and the three conversed, what enlightenment was this to the world? The conversation was not to be made known. 'Keep it dark?' said the Prince of Light, and dark it is still, and men know no more now than before the appearance of these three men, Enoch, Moses, and the Christ."

This conversation was a great shock to the missionary. He had moved chiefly in the orthodox lines and was saturated with the Christian ideas. Now he met a mind that looked with contempt upon these revelations.

"But was it not natural that Moses and Elias should appear and talk to Deity on the mountain?" said Angelus. "It would strengthen the hands and uphold the faith of the One who was about to suffer at Jerusalem."

"If it was natural for Moses and Elias to appear to sustain the failing hands of Deity about to suffer," said the Priest, "why should we be surprised to find Enoch, Moses, and Elijah again on earth? Yet, who but fools will believe that these three men on the Rock of Sacrifice were the veritable trio, who, for so many centuries, have been believed to have passed away to their rest forever?

Angelus was not prepared to support the view that

these three men were again on earth. He could believe that three hundred years ago Deity had walked the earth and that Moses and Elias had appeared to Him, but in the present, he could not receive the three men who rowed them to the island as the veritable saints of old, returned to earth.

The Priest noticing the missionary's silence, and being desirous of returning to Savelona, deemed this a good opportunity to introduce the subject, and continued:

"As Heaven is silent let us invoke common sense. You, Angelus, are panting to return to Savelona to proclaim your views and marry Monica. I, naturally, desire to return to my home and daughters and friends. I have so many that it would be wrong to be absent longer!"

And as the Priest said this a dark scowl passed over his features and his tones were full of cutting sarcasm. As the missionary did not reply, the Priest continued: "Let us take the boat and row the women across the ocean. The time of year is propitious and all favors the venture. What say you, Angelus, are you willing? There is no danger, as I have voyaged the path many times before."

Angelus listened to the voice of the tempter, and, as the holy ones had not replied, he felt he must decide without them, he, therefore, said:

"Be it so, Spenata, and with the sanction of the women we will start to-morrow. I will break the matter to them to-night for I feel it is useless to wait longer for Enoah and his companions."

The women, moved by the wishes of Angelus, consented to the voyage; and thus, for weal or woe, it was decided that these four should be thrown together on the

perils of the ocean, and, if they reached land safely, that these two men should work their will in Savelona, and the women were but straws floating with the stream.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE QUEEN PLOTS TO ENSNARE BENONI.

About the time that the boat put off from the island with its four inmates, and well laden with provisions, the Queen was leaving the City of Savelona in her chariot, accompanied by the Prince Benoni, the Comander-in-Chief, Durana, and the women of the court in attendance on her Majesty.

The sun burst forth in the morning splendour and lit up the city, and the soft breeze bore the perfume of flowers from the palace grounds as the conclave passed through on their way to the Gardens of Sordello.

The Queen, riding between Durana and Benoni, conversed gaily, and noted the scenes of interest on the route, pointing them out to the Prince.

"I would," said the Queen, "that my sister could have been with us. She is such an ardent lover of fine scenery. Orlando, too, would have enjoyed this journey. Do you not admire the young Chief, Prince Benoni?"

"I think him worthy of the highest esteem and most loving friendship," warmly replied Benoni. "He is a son to be proud of, Durana, and will hold forth the family laurels as you have done, Commander-in-Chief."

The father listened with gratified pride and pleasure to these warm expressions of the Prince, and then replied:

"It was deemed the best to leave him in Savelona. I am somewhat afraid her Majesty may regret this journey to the Gardens of Sordello now her people and the priests are so dissatisfied by the non-appointment of a High Priest."



SHE WAS THE FIRST TO WALK IN THE GARDENS. See p. 109.



"Now, Durana," said the Queen, speaking in good humor, "do not be a death's-head in my party of pleasure. I have come out to enjoy myself, with my maids of honor and two most worthy friends. We will banish all sad thoughts and forget that I am Queen of Savelona for awhile. Heigho, Plenena, come forward with your silver lyre, and sing for us some love song, that shall remind Durana of his youthful days and Prince Benoni of the fair beauty he has left behind on the island home."

And as the Queen spoke she cast her dark eyes full upon the Prince, and saw him start when she named the island home. The Commander-in-Chief, too, looked anxiously upon the Queen as though he would discover how much she knew of the history of the Prince.

Plenena came out of the ranks of the maids of honor, and sang one of the love ditties of the country, accompanying herself softly by the strains of the lyre.

The Queen listened attentively, while, ever and anon, she gazed upon the face of Benoni, which had become very dear to her.

"I thank thee, Plenena," said the Queen. "Thy sweet notes are more gratifying to my ears than the croaking of my advisers. When thou art ready to wed, Plenena, come to the Queen and she will find thee one worthy of thy love."

"I have found one already, your Majesty, if I may be so bold as to own it in the presence of your Chief and Prince."

"And does he return thy love, my Plenena? Nay, do not blush and hang down thy head. I warrant me thou art worthy of his love, and if there be any obstacles in the way I will remove them."

"Alas, your Majesty, I fear the obstacles are too great for even your Majesty to overcome."

"Go to, go to," said the Queen, "you know not the power we wield. Yet, if thou wouldest prefer to speak to me in private, let it be when we have got to the Gardens of Sordello. There are groves and winding paths and walkings in the shade to suit all tastes, and, by and by, some young gallants will follow to bear you all company."

Thus cheerfully the Queen conversed, as one, long confined in school, let loose enjoyed her freedom.

Her gay laugh and joyous face made all merry, and the Prince forgot his anxiety for his journey in the pleasure of the moment, and Durana gradually gave way to the Queen's mood and laughed merrily with the others.

Thus they reached the Gardens of Sordello as the sun sank softly in the west, tipping the clouds with golden glory, and shedding a soft tint around on the lovely landscape.

The Queen and Benoni alighted from their chariots and stood together on the hill to watch the sunset.

"Is it not beautiful, Prince Benoni?" said the Queen, speaking in gentle tones. "I often wonder what lies beyond, where the sun sinks down in glory, like a huge monarch going gently to sleep after the travels of the day."

"It goes, noble Queen, to shed light and heat to other lands. The sun never sleeps, but always shines to cheer mankind and work fertility to the soil, and produces fruit and flowers and insect life and everything that moves. In our religion the sun is the highest manifestation of the Deity, and we worship God through it."

"But do you not worship the sun, Benoni?" inquired

the Queen. "I have always heard that the Parsees were sun-worshippers, and bowed down at the rising and setting of the Orb of Day."

"This may be so with the ignorant," replied Benoni. "But the educated worship only the Almighty Creator. In the sun they see His greatest power, life-giving and beneficent. So in other natural things they trace the goodness and power of Deity, but our minds ever go up from nature to nature's God in prayer and praise and thankfulness."

"Ah, Benoni, when I hear you speak thus of the Creator I long to be of your faith and so get rid of creeds and mysteries."

"But, your Majesty," replied Benoni, "are you not already of our faith? Its main doctrine is that God is good and God is love. And its next is near unto it, and that is Universal Brotherhood."

"But, surely," replied the Queen, "this is Christianity, and not Zoroastrianism?"

"The difference between the two religions," replied the Prince, "is universal charity in ours and exclusion in the other. We believe there is good in all religions. But Christians assert that out of their creeds there is no deliverance. We believe in the Almighty Creator and worship only Him. While Christians place a man on equality with Deity, and a woman as a way to Heaven. These are the errors I want to expose at Rome and Constantinople. When will your Majesty consent to my going?"

The Queen was greatly surprised at the way the Prince had turned the conversation, and with pique replied:

"Lead me to my chariot, Benoni. Will you not enjoy a few happy days with me here without reminding me of our separation? Why should it be Benoni? Could you not be happy in such a paradise as this?"

And as she spake, the setting sun bore a soft languishing gaze from those dark eyes which the Queen cast on Benoni.

The Prince took her hand in silence and assisted her into the chariot, and when the Queen was seated he bowed and said:

"I will not again offend your Majesty during our stay here, but enjoy the Gardens of Sordello, and hope and pray that your Majesty may find a true prince to join you in this fair paradise, for the gardens are indeed most beautiful."

"Ah, Benoni," softly said the Queen, casting down her eyes, "you have read the secret of my heart, but your soul does not respond."

"Your Majesty," said the Prince, deeply moved, "I shall ever be your friend, and in future years I shall recall the happy days we have passed together. Will not this suffice you?"

"I want not a little corner in your heart, Benoni, I want to fill the whole."

And as the Queen uttered this she heaved a longing sigh, and twilight gently settled over the gardens, and the stars came out one by one, and young love took possession of the Queen, and she was radiant with hope.

She had planned this journey in the hope that when the Prince was touched by the beauty of the scene, and when Nature wore her gayest garb, his heart would respond to her's and their wishes be united.

The Commander-in-Chief, who was a staunch adherent of the Queen, had been invited to play propriety, for even majesty must bow to the world's opinions. But, if she could have had her will she would have gone alone to the gardens with Benoni, and there tried the magic of her charms.

She rose early the following morning and, dispensing with the forms of State, was the first to walk in the gardens.

The birds caroled forth their morning songs of praise, and the Queen listened to their sweet melody, and her heart went forth in aspirations to the Creator of so much beauty.

She felt it sweet to live and, free from the restraints of court life, she, too, sang with joyous thankfulness for the gift of life, and looked not on the cloud of sorrow just rising in the distance. It is well for mortals such as we to see but dimly into the future, otherwise our present would be marred and blurred.

While the Queen and Benoni were enjoying the beauty of the Gardens of Sordello, the Priest and missionary were landing the two women on the Continent of Africa, having safely passed the dangers of the sea.

They found the heat oppressive and, though cramped and wearied by the voyage, there was no alternative but to walk forward towards Savelona.

Angelus and Spenata did all they could to assist and encourage their fair companions, and, as the night came on, they saw a dwelling where they applied for rest for the women.

“And who are you?” said the woman who attended at the door and listened to Spenata's inquiry.

"I am Spenata, the High Priest of Heaven," said the Priest.

The woman, speaking loud and angrily, replied: "And do the murderers of innocence rise from the dead and walk the earth? We know that Spenata, the wicked Priest, was accursed and killed by lightning sent by the gods. Away, therefore, thou lying man, and find some other place to rest. We receive not here such as thou."

And the woman closed the door and safely bolted it from within, and the Priest, scowling revengefully, passed forward into the darkness with his companions who were greatly shocked at their reception.

"Alas," said the Priest, "and is it thus, I am viewed? I was but conforming to the ideas of the past that Deity required sacrifice to appease His anger. Even Abraham the father of the faithful, was prepared to offer up his son."

"True," said the missionary, "but he received inspiration from Heaven."

"Was it not rather imitation than inspiration?" replied the Priest. "It was the custom of the surrounding tribes to offer up their first born to their gods to save their souls, and Abraham was not beyond his age. But, at the last moment, reason and affection came to his aid, and he saw a way of escape by the ram caught in the thicket. Had he slain his son what would the Princess Sarah have said when he returned and told her?"

"She would have called him murderer," said Monica, "and his mad infatuation and fanatic imitation would have been no excuse to her for the loss of her greatly beloved son, Isaac."

"And yet," said the Priest, "she could turn out into

the wilderness Ishmael's mother and the little son of Abraham to die of hunger. Truly, these children of God are queer mortals!"

Thus sneeringly spake the Priest whose anger had been roused by the words of the woman at the hut. It was a sad blow to the Priest and ambitious Spenata to be thus received and spoken of in the Kingdom where his power had been despotic and his word the law. "If," he reasoned, "this rude woman can thus view my conduct and the scenes on the Rock of Sacrifice, may not the citizens of Savelona think the same?"

And he cast about in his mind how best to act to retrieve his lost position.

"It appears clear," he mused, "that the ignorant and superstitious people view my fall as the direct intervention of Heaven in support of Angelus. He is now the one beloved of the gods, and this occurrence will be taken as Heaven's approval of Christianity. The missionary, in his dull brain, does not see the full effect of his own deliverance, but I must work it into a scheme to regain my power."

Thus originated an idea in the cunning brain of the Priest, and he sought further to ingratiate himself with Angelus, and glean from him the full particulars of the Christian doctrines and dogmas, and their modes of Church government and discipline.

Angelus was pleased to give the Priest all necessary information, and Spenata soon saw that Christianity could be easily worked up into a great institution with himself as the head as Archbishop of Savelona instead of High Priest of Heaven.

Spenata was not concerned as to the evidences and

proofs of Christianity. It was sufficient for him to realize that the new faith was a workable commodity and would take with the people.

He realized that all the nations of the past and present, except the Zoroastrians, required some tangible god, and the nearer he was brought to man's own image albeit a little raised, the more they would believe in it.

"The ancients say," mused Spenata, "that man was made in the image of God. But, truly, man has made God in his own image, and liable to err and repent and err again. Man has endowed Deity with passion like himself. Deity is but elevated into a Heaven a little higher than the world, and so near that the ancients imagined they could build high enough to reach the gods, and so escape dying. Poor ignorant mortals they knew not that the Almighty dwells in infinitude, and that His laws, established ere the foundation of the world, prevented any such ready ascent. Moses knew not these laws, or no angel would have been sent to confound the people's tongue. The laws of creation, of themselves would have answered the purpose."

But Spenata, weary of these musings, and, while the women slept under the shade of the trees, tired by their travels, determined to ascertain from the missionary all necessary information to make a creed for the people.

The Priest was well acquainted with the main theory that a god was incarnated in an earthly form and died and rose again, and thereby the wrath of Heaven was appeased, provided that man believed all of this, but if he did not so believe the wrath of God still overshadowed the unbeliever and the sacrifice was wasted as to such infidels. But Spenata required the minor

doctrines more clearly defined. He felt Christianity was a science, worked into shape by the Roman bishops, aided by the Emperor Constantine, and if good for such a powerful Empire surely it would do for the small Kingdom of Savelona.

"If, as you say, Angelus," spoke the Priest, "that this new faith is to overrun the world perhaps we may as well anticipate events and found it in this Kingdom. If you can place me in a post of dignity my influence will materially assist the spread of the faith. To succeed I should know all the latest novelties, and how the Roman bishops win the people. What name should I bear? At present I am High Priest of Heaven, but as the gods, in that capacity, have frowned on me, perhaps I may be Archbishop of Savelona and the founder of Christianity in this benighted spot."

"Unless you profess the faith," said Angelus, "you cannot hold any post in the Christian Church."

"But," replied the Priest, "Constantine is supreme head of the Church and founder of Christianity. It would have made no headway if he had not adopted it as the State religion. He bought over the people by presents and held up the bishops as Heaven's inspired messengers. I can do the same through my daughter, Costanza."

"What then is to become of Ivena, the present Queen?" inquired the missionary.

"Her power dies with the old religion. Costanza is more manageable. Ivena has a will of her own, and her neglect of Heaven's Priest is disregard to Heaven itself. She is unworthy of the honor of being the first Queen of the heathen to adopt Christianity."

“Surely,” said Angelus, “she is as worthy as the Emperor?”

“In that, Angelus,” replied the Priest, “you are right, for Constantine is the murderer of his own son, his wife, his brother-in-law, and infant nephew, but he loved his mother always and never allowed her to lay neglected on a desert island. That is an unpardonable sin. Ivena must resign her power and Costanza must reign in her stead.”

Thus confidentially spake the majesty-creator, Spenata. He had conceived the thought in his subtle brain, and saw its workings clearly. He was determined to humble the proud Ivena, and as he raised her to power so he would cast her down.

“Tell me, Angelus, what is the new doctrine as to infants. Do they go to Heaven or the other place?”

“If baptized, they go straight to Heaven, but if the parents neglect this rite, and a child dies unbaptized, it goes straight to hell, and it is said there are infants a span long in that dreadful place.”

“Wonderful doctrine, Angelus! Worthy of a wonderful inventive people! And the heathen, such as those of Savelona before you came, what becomes of these?”

“They go to the same place, Spenata.”

“What, although they never heard the name of the Christian Saviour?” inquired the Priest.

“Yes, such is the doctrine of our Church and it cannot err.”

“Wonderful Church, Angelus! Doctrine worthy of a Heaven-appointed institution! Truly, their god is indeed a god of wrath and vengeance! We must seek for such a god as this, and implant him firmly in this dark

and benighted Kingdom of Savelona! And are all saved who believe Christianity, Angelus?"

"Those who are fore-ordained, that is the elect, are saved. The others are predestined to be lost and nothing can save them. Of such were Pharaoh and Judas."

"Wonderful!" said the Priest. "Truly the Romans are great people! They are more inventive than the Druids or the Hebrews. And do the bishops and priests believe all these things?"

"They preach them at all events," replied the missionary. "And also that once lost the soul has no further chance. How important then to believe while in this life."

"But," said the Priest, "the heathen, who never hear of Christ, and unbaptized infants have never had a fair chance. Don't you think we could touch up this doctrine a little for them? And then, again, the non-elect cannot help themselves. Don't you think, in our revised Church, we could give a revised creed, a little more in accordance with common sense? I hear the Roman bishops have revised, altered and amended the Christian scriptures to suit their views. Surely, we may revise our creed!"

"The scriptures," said Angelus, "were only inspiration. The creeds are the work of great minds, now living amongst us, with all the influences of Church and State to back them. No, I fear the creeds must stand as they are propounded!"

The Priest looked pityingly upon the missionary and wondered how a man's mind could become so warped as to believe such doctrines as these. But Spenata saw no other way of gaining power, and thus mused:

"What fools are these mortals! And yet I shall only

follow in the steps of Constantine. He saw the pagan faith was dying and hastened to profess, in some degree, the new doctrines. He has never been baptized, neither will I. He could buy believers, so can I. He can oppress and compel belief, and so can I.

And as these thoughts passed through his mind, his brow darkened and his features recalled the cruel Druid Priest who hesitated not to shed blood.

"And I fear these Christians do the same," mused Spenata. "and by and by, when the bishops are firmly seated on their spiritual earthly throne, they will burn all who oppose them. Thus stamping out effectually all infidelity and getting these ideas into the blood, so that the same will pass from parent to child as truths—unquestioned and unchallenged. Thus it will be in Christian Rome and Christian Britain, and thus it shall be in heathen Savelona! Aye, and I shall be the founder here as Constantine is at Rome and Constantinople, and future ages shall extol and almost worship the divine Spenata, the founder of true religion on the dark continent."





PLACING THE CROWN OF ROYALTY ON COSTANZA'S HEAD HE HAILED HER  
AS QUEEN OF SAVELONA. See p. 122.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A CUNNING PRIEST — UNREQUITED LOVE.

While the Priest was revolving in his cunning brain the establishing of Christianity in Savelona, and he and his companions were proceeding to the capital, the Queen was enjoying the beauty of the Gardens of Sordello.

She was free from interruption of State affairs, and could go in and out of the garden palace without any attendance, except Benoni.

They sauntered through the grounds together, and sat on the garden seats or the mossy banks, and conversed of sunny Spain and Britain, both dear to the memory of the Queen. And she would hum snatches of love songs, and point out the scenes that were pleasing to her fancy, and in the cool of the evening the pair would watch the twilight settle over the earth and the stars come forth, and on moonlight nights the Prince would row her on the garden lake.

Thus the time passed sweetly to the Queen and she hoped the Prince was approaching nearer her views. He was always kind and thoughtful, and she fancied he began to love her.

This state of things, however, could not last. Durana sought an audience and reminded her that the time of the assembly was approaching.

“ You, good friend, shall be my deputy,” said the Queen. “ I am not accustomed to set speeches and, now I come to think of it, I should only mar my success. You can explain to my people my wishes and I will abide by their decision.”

It was in vain Durana pointed out the influence of her presence, and how the populace would be moved by her beauty and queenly appearance. She remained firm and desired him to proceed to the capital and represent her in the assembly.

Finding that nothing could alter this determination he next endeavored to get her to assent to the Prince accompanying him, but in this also Durana failed.

"No," said the Queen, "on further consideration if I am not there to support Benoni in his statements they might do harm instead of good. I recall that he is a foreigner, and altogether it will be better for the Prince to stay here. I should now feel lonely without his presence at the gardens."

And the Queen gazed into the distance and a soft look came into her dark eyes. She was dwelling on the thought of having Benoni all to herself.

"Ah, noble Queen, I fear you are losing your heart to this foreigner. I had thought that my son, Orlando, was destined to share your throne and power. He loves you truly, and for yourself alone. He is staying in Savelona to watch your interests. What message shall I bear him?"

"Tell him," said the Queen, "that I love him as a sister. That I admire and esteem his nobility of character, and thank him for his good will in my behalf."

"And is he to have no hope, Ivena? My years are numbered and ere long I shall pass to the great Unknown. I had hoped before then to have seen him happy in your love, and his strong mind and arm bound to your service."

"I hope, Durana," replied the Queen, "that when-

ever I cease to have your able aid your son will command my forces, and believe he will prove as worthy and reliable as you have ever been, my good and noble adviser and Commander. But, even a Queen, cannot control her heart. As a sister looks up to and loves a brother so shall I ever look upon Orlando."

And Durana was compelled to be satisfied with this. He realized that so long as Benoni was here Orlando had no prospect of success in his wooing. But the upright old man was too noble in character to entertain any petty jealousy. He, therefore, parted with the Queen and Prince with cordiality stating that as soon as the assembly was over he would send a royal escort for them.

Yet he left Sordello with a sadness in his heart for which he could not account, and as he gained the hill from which he had the last view of the gardens, he looked sorrowfully upon the fair scene, musing:

"Alas, how strange is life! Ere we went to the sacrifice everything pointed to my son's success in winning the woman of his choice. Yet, in a few weeks, this Prince, of whom we know nothing, comes and takes full possession of the Queen. He is all the world to her, and the long devotion of my son is as nothing compared with Benoni. Yet Orlando is as lovable, and as noble and worthy. And are marriages really made in heaven? If so, will the Prince and Queen be one? Yet I believe he does not love her. Nay, he may have other ties. Farewell, Sordello, but I will not abandon all hope for Orlando."

Thus the old Chief, looking back upon his own young days of courtship, retained hopes of final success for his son, and as he neared Savelona thoughts of the purpose

of his visit and its importance took possession of his mind to the exclusion of other matters.

He found the city in great excitement through the return of the Priest and missionary and arrival of the women.

There was also another party who had recently came from the interior. This consisted of Marcel and his friends, and another missionary named Ambrose.

For sometime the Priest was able to keep his party separated from Marcel, and also from the intrigues of politics. But on the day of the assembly the two missionaries met.

“Angelus,” said Ambrose, “we have been trying to obtain an interview for several days. Have you not heard of our being in the city? I trust you can see me for a few minutes? I bring important news from Constantinople”

“Welcome, brother,” replied Angelus. “I am truly pleased to see you here. I, too, have important news to communicate. We are about to found Christianity in this benighted country.”

Then Angelus related the occurrences already narrated, and how he was ransomed from martyrdom, adding:

“Truly it appears a direct intervention of Providence; and I have been spared to be one of the means of finding the truth in the land.”

Then he related the conversations with the Priest, and the mode of proceeding in the assembly, and the efforts that had been used to win over the popular mind.

“And it will come about that without any revolution

Heaven's true kingdom shall be established on the earth."

The assembly met and Durana represented the views of the Queen. But he was received with groans and hisses, and cries were heard for the Queen. One rough man stood forth and said:

"Commander, where is the Queen? And where is that foreign Prince who was to speak and turn the religion of this powerful kingdom with his golden eloquence? Are they not in dalliance in the Gardens of Sordello? And this Prince we hear is married, and his wife is amongst us now. Away with such a Queen! She is unworthy to rule over this great kingdom. Let her father stand forth and say what shall be done."

At this speech there were calls for Spenata. He stood forth and in cunning words spoke of Heaven's intervention on behalf of Angelus.

He then pictured the Christian faith in glowing colors and spoke of the Deity that came down from Heaven to redeem mankind. He also alluded to the great extent and power and high civilization of the Roman Empire.

"And," added the Priest, "if the religion be so good for that great Empire will it not be good for Savelona?"

Then turning from this subject he referred to his elder daughter, and spoke forcibly against her conduct with Benoni, adding:

"And the Prince has been false to one of earth's most lovely daughters. He must be base to forsake one so noble for her who could allow her father to suffer without a single inquiry. Ivena is unworthy to be Queen. Behold my daughter, Costanza. She is worthy in every way to be your Queen."

"Long live Queen Costanza! Down with Ivena!" were exclamations coming from all parts of the building.

And the wily Priest was fully prepared, and placing the crown of royalty on Costanza's head hailed her as Queen of Savelona.

Orlando was absent from the assembly, he having been dispatched with a powerful escort to Sordello with direction from Durana to implore the Queen to return ere it was too late.

But the Priest had heard of the expedition, and dispatched a trusty messenger to Ivena, who reached the gardens before Orlando, and was at once admitted to the Queen.

"I have been sent, your Majesty," said he, "to warn you to flee while yet you have time. Your sister has been proclaimed Queen in lieu of you, and an army is coming out to seize you for misgovernment. Your father has returned enraged at your neglect, and vows your death. Flee while you have the opportunity. The Prince, too, is doomed."

Thus saying he drew the Queen to an eminence from which she could see the road leading to Sordello.

"There," continued the messenger, "is the army come to take you and the Prince."

And as he spake Orlando and his soldiers appeared on the top of the hill, but they were too far off for the Queen to recognize her friend. Besides she knew the revengeful nature of her father and fully believed the messenger.

Her decision was soon formed, and it seemed providential that the opportunity should have come for her to get Benoni all to herself.

This feeling for him was changing into a mania. She had dwelt upon the thought for weeks, and their solitary wanderings at Sordello added to the flame, and it had grown into an absorbing passion.

Addressing the messenger, she said: "Get out the royal chariot and we will fly together," and adding to herself: "Dear Benoni, now you will be mine alone."

Whilst the messenger went to do the Queen's behest, Ivena sought out Benoni, and, recounting to him the position of matters, added:

"Benoni, we will take the royal barge and fly together to your home or Constantinople. It is now in the harbor ready for a cruise, and here is my chariot to take us quickly free from all pursuit."

The Prince was divided in thought. To stay was to court unnecessary danger. Yet to fly alone with the Queen would, when known, create a scandal. "But," he reasoned, "I can be with Serapta long ere the news can reach her."

He mused and planned however in the dark and knew not that the love of his heart was already in the hands of his enemies, and that his conduct would be watched and told against him to his hurt.

Spenata, with his deep cunning, had foreseen all this, and hoped by expedition to weave around Benoni such a web of circumstances that Serapta must admit herself forsaken for Ivena.

The pair left the gardens, and the messenger, desirous of being able to report fully to Spenata, followed in their track. But, ere doing so, he exchanged a few words with Plenena.

"See that Orlando is kept in ignorance," said he, "un-

til I return to report to you that the Queen and Prince have started on their voyage. I rely upon you, Plenena, so shall our marriage soon be crowned with royal favor, for this is a great service for Spenata, and he will again practically rule the Kingdom of Savelona."

Plenena promised to do her best, and thus she mused: "Methinks, Ivena, I am doing you a great service. I know how you love the Prince, and now you will have him all to yourself, and the result must rest with you. May you both be happy."

When, therefore, Orlando arrived with his soldiers a message was sent for him to dismount and await the Queen's return.

Orlando, not suspecting any treachery, gave the order, and the soldiers quickly stabled their horses and fed them. In the meantime the Queen's household provided entertainment for the men, and they were invited to the feast.

But Orlando was ill at ease, and his impatient spirit chafed at the delay in meeting with her he loved so well and whom he desired to serve.

He made inquiries but could not ascertain where the Queen had gone. It was, however, a bitter thing to learn that the Prince had accompanied her.

"This Prince," mused Orlando, "is ever dangling by her side, while I, who have known her so long, am kept at a distance. But I shall yet be able to prove to thee, Ivena, how deeply I love and trust thee."

The young lover walked in the gardens, but saw not its beauty. The sky cast a sombre gray over the flowers, and in the distance was a dark cloud which encircled him in despair.

The twilight came on and as Orlando grew more impatient he heard the sound of a chariot drive quickly up to the palace, but ere he could reach the court-yard it was gone.

He again inquired for the Queen and insisted she was in the palace.

"Nay," said the gate-keeper, "she has not yet returned. It was but the singer, Plenena, leaving with her lover for Savelona."

"Where then is the Queen?" demanded Orlando. "I am here on State affairs of great importance and must know where she is to be found."

"I know not," said the keeper. "The Queen went out alone with Prince Benoni as she has often done. Probably they have gone to the ruins of Hoamo, where they have frequently spent the day, and will return ere long."

"I cannot wait longer," replied Orlando. "I must be in action"

And, sounding a note on his silver flute, the soldiers were quickly ready to attend to his orders.

Singling out a dozen he despatched them to the ruins with instructions to find the Queen and hasten her return.

"Ask her Majesty to ride in my chariot," said Orlando, "and come to the palace immediately. It is of the first importance for her to be in Savelona at to-morrow's dawn. Alas," he added to himself, "I fear it will then be too late."

Other soldiers he sent in another direction, but it occurred not to him to send to the harbor.

Then, left nearly alone, he began restlessly pacing the

court-yard, and the gate-keeper looked stolidly on and pitied him.

Thus matters went on through the night, and the soldiers returned but without discovering the Queen. Orlando became alarmed, and, at the break of day, sallied forth on a personal quest.

“Surely,” said he, “something must have happened to Ivena. She could never willingly absent herself in the night without any attendant. No, something has happened to my love. Oh, Ivena, how I would have shielded thee from harm even though thou gave me no warmer affection than a sister’s love. But now, alas, where art thou ?”

And as Orlando rode quickly along he asked of all passers-by if they had seen the Queen.

As the rising sun shone in the heavens it cast a beam upon the sea, and the young man’s attention was drawn to the water sparkling in the sunlight.

“Ah, has she taken a sail and been benighted ?” I will go to the harbor and inquire as to the royal barge. I see it not. Yes, she must be on the water.”

And he put spurs to his horse and galloped furiously to the water’s edge. He found no ship, but by the side of the sea stood the royal chariot deserted.

“This shows,” said Orlando, “that she only went for a short sail. Yet how strange that she should leave the chariot and horses thus. Surely the Queen could have arranged stabling for the steeds ? Alas, what has come over her ?”

And the young man, still thinking no wrong but only heedlessness, regretted the Queen’s inattention to her royal dignity to so comport herself alone with Benoni.

A boatman coming by, Orlando sought information. "Know you ought of the Queen?" inquired the soldier. "We have sought her all the night yet found her not. Here is the royal chariot but the ship is gone."

"Yesterday as I passed through the harbor," replied the boatman, "I saw the royal colors flying from the masthead and the captain of the ship was just starting on a voyage. On the deck stood the Queen and Prince Benoni whom I have seen of late around the palace grounds along with the Queen."

"And didst thou hear, good boatman, whither they were going, or what stay they proposed?"

"I heard the Prince speak of India and another place with a long name, but I did not catch the Queen's reply."

"Didst thou hear them mention Constantinople?" Alas, if the Queen has fled thither with the Prince all my hopes are gone forever."

The boatman looked upon the anxious, yearning face of the young soldier, and detected that there was something seriously wrong.

It was, therefore, with a sorrowful tone that he replied:

"That is the long name mentioned by the Prince, and when he said they would thither go, a smile came over the Queen's face and her loveliness was perfect. She then gave her orders to the captain and I heard no more."

"Thank thee, good fellow. Here is gold, go and enjoy thyself, but mention not what thou hast heard. See that the royal horses are well taken care of."

And Orlando realized that the Queen had fled with Benoni.

"But," he reasoned, "why all this concealment? She was the Queen and could have married him in broad day. Alas, Ivena, my idol, my love, why hast thou fallen thus!"

And hot tears rained down his cheeks as he spurred his horse to greater speed. Deep down in his heart was a drear loneliness and sadness, and yet he desired to think kindly of her.

"Perhaps," said he, "she has had news of her father's return and, knowing his revengeful nature, has fled hastily in fear. Alas, Ivena, if thou hadst stayed my father and I would have given our life's blood to support thee on the throne. But now, thou hast voluntarily resigned the crown, and Spenata will place thy more yielding sister in thy place. Nay, perhaps, she is already crowned."

And Orlando hastily summoned his men and rode briskly forward to Savelona.

But Harlez, the messenger sent by the Priest, and Plenena had reached there considerably in advance and reported to Spenata the Queen's flight.

They brought with them from the garden palace an unique ring set with pearls belonging to the Prince which in the hasty flight he had left behind. It was cut with Parsee characters, indicative of the sun and fire held in veneration by the Zoroastrians, and was an heirloom belonging to the ancient family of the Prince.

In ancient times this jewel was believed to possess mystic properties and worn as a talisman against the Evil One. But Benoni smiled at harm coming from such an unknown source and looked upon it simply as a memento of the past ages.

Serapta had often seen it on his hand and he had told her that if ever they were parted and he sent this ring, she was to obey the messenger.

The Priest took hold of this ring and noting its antiquity soon planned a way to move the Princess. She had heard rumors of Benoni and Queen Ivena, but thought no harm of her husband. She felt he could do no wrong, and would never forsake her.

When, therefore, Harlez sought her presence, and handed her the ring and delivered her a message as from her husband, Serapta was ready at once to fly to Benoni.

"And," said Harlez, "the Queen has placed the royal barge at your husband's disposal to proceed to Constantinople and proposes to fly with you. She has heard of her father's return and is afraid. Your husband besought you not to lose a moment in coming to him as the Queen must fly at once."

Thus importuned, Serapta sought out Monica and informed her of the message. The Princess would not hear of her friend accompanying her.

"Your place is here, Monica, near to Angelus, your future husband. When these changes are settled he will be made bishop and you will have to aid him in his noble work."

And Serapta thanked her friend and kissed her lovingly and was speedily ready to accompany Harlez in the chariot which he had prepared.

Thus they started on their journey to Sordello, and Harlez took the precaution to go a different route to the one usually taken so as to avoid meeting with Orlando and his men.

At the same time another chariot left with directions from Spenata to remove the maids of honor to a secluded castle in the outlaying parts of the kingdom, and all steps were taken to keep the actual circumstances of Ivena's flight from Serapta until the Priest could go himself to Sordello, for, at present, he had too much on hand at Savelona to absent himself from the capital.

When the Priest had disposed of these matters he turned his attention to the establishing of Christianity in the kingdom. He did not anticipate much difficulty. The people, generally, were indifferent as to creeds. So long as there was a religion recognized by the State, and having a visible priesthood, they were satisfied to believe what was told them.

Angelus, aided now by Ambrose, and having the presence of Spenata and the other priests, proclaimed with zeal the new faith, painting, in glowing colors, the beautiful self-sacrifice of the Saviour of mankind.

And the poor people heard him gladly. He spake of hope and rest for the weary and sorrowful, and a re-union with the departed, who had passed over the river of death and been received on the ever-shining bank beyond. He pictured a home where all true and pure souls would be gathered in and bask in glorious sunshine forever.

He pictured Deity as a God of love, and as he spake with enthusiasm and zeal from his inward convictions, with his eyes looking heavenward, the people believed him a true messenger from Heaven.

His deliverance from martyrdom contributed greatly to this result. One whom the gods looked after and re-

leased from death could be none other than Heaven's favorite. Then to see the proud Priest listening so calmly to the missionary. Truly, reasoned the people, there must be something in this Christianity if it can change such an one as Spenata.

Thus the deep earnestness and sincerity of Angelus aided the schemes of the Priest, and the populace clamored for the establishment of the new religion.

"Angelus' God shall be our God," they cried, and the Priest listened and chuckled to find how easily his scheme worked.

Then he heard from Ambrose how Constantine had founded Christianity in the Roman Empire.

"The Emperor," said Ambrose, "gave a baptismal garment and twenty pieces of silver to all who would profess Christianity by baptism. By this means ten thousand were brought to the Church in one year. The priesthood were elevated in the Church. Bishops were created and those who would not conform to the belief of the majority were banished and persecuted. By these means the Emperor has stamped out heresy in the Empire."

"And what is heresy?" inquired one standing near. "Heresy," replied Ambrose, "is the disbelief in the creeds of the Church as propounded by the Councils of the Emperor and the bishops. Heretics are declared enemies to the State and handed over to the secular power for punishment, and, by and by, there will be nothing but professing Christians in the great Roman Empire. Nay, it is said, that this religion will cover the earth."

"And will wars cease and wealth be divided and poverty cease?" inquired another listener. "This, as I

understand it, was the doctrine of the Jewish prophet."

"I see no signs of these things," sorrowfully replied Ambrose. "Wars still proceed, and it may be said, 'See how these Christians hate one another.' They persecute, banish and murder each other. Those possessed of wealth keep it to themselves and none are more grasping than the Christians, and the poor are still amongst the rich and often left to starve."

"Ah, I thought," said the previous speaker, "that true Christianity was true brotherhood of man and that all were equal, and that the strong should help the weak. I fear this new faith will do but little to aid humanity. It is but ringing changes in names and creeds unless it tends to spread universal sympathy and aid."

And thus the important citizens conversed, and another inquired:

"And is Constantine a true Christian? And has he abolished the old images, and the old customs, and the old religion?"

"Alas," said Ambrose, "he has not been born again. He still acts as Pontiff of the old religion and assists at the sacrifices. He has placed the old images of the gods in Constantinople side by side with the image of the Saviour and the Virgin Mother. He refuses to be baptized, and that has ever been the distinguishing mark of the adoption of a belief. He treats the new faith as another religion and adopts it, as he continues the old practices, by way of policy only. But the bishops care not for all this. They are quietly cementing their power, and little by little getting the upper hand, so that ere long their influence will be despotic. Then, truly, they

will grind down the people and stand on the necks of kings."

The Priest listened attentively to this conversation and his subtle mind embraced all the possibilities of the new faith and he took the opportunity of breaking up the interview.

But when he was alone with the two missionaries and the priests of the old religion, he shewed that the conversations had been closely noted.

"I am glad, Ambrose," he said, "to hear in private as to the means taken by Constantine to propagate the Christian religion, for by the same means we may spread the faith in this land. Yet, I doubt very much the policy of making this information public property. Imitate your colleague, Angelus. He dwells only on the beautiful side of Christianity. He leaves out of sight the temporal means of spreading the faith, the creeds, and the actual results. He speaks only of the possibilities of this religion if truly carried out by the whole of humanity. He appeals to the heart and not the head. Depend upon it, creeds will not stand investigations of the intellect. They are man-formed, but the intellect is the gift of Deity. Therefore, Ambrose, take a leaf from Angelus' book and speak more like him."

Ambrose was greatly incensed and inclined to give an angry retort but policy ruled. He saw in the close future the title and pickings of a bishopric and, as he despised the abilities of his colleague, he intended to be the next in power to Spenata, and even soared so high as to contemplate the founding of a western archbishopric. He, therefore, deemed it the best to turn the conversation to a settlement of creeds, thereby giving scope

for a display of his acquaintance with the Councils of Rome and the science of Christianity.

“Noble Spenata,” said Ambrose, “each must work according to his gifts. Some can draw on the imagination and picture the beauties of Heaven and the horrors of hell. While others, more inclined to the polemic, can explain the creeds and enter into the mysteries of godliness. My forte lies in the latter. I love to argue on the great truths of the Christian faith.”

“And there is ample scope,” sneeringly replied Spenata. “Life is a mystery. We know not why we are sent into the world. Why we pass a few years full of changing scenes and then join the departed multitude. But away with moralizing. Men are better to have a creed. It saves them from the trouble of forming one for themselves. Let us hear, then, what the Roman world say of Christ and the Virgin Mother. It has ever appeared to me a strange thing—these divine incarnations. Horus, the god of the Egyptians, was one of these, and the pictures of the god-mother with the infant Horus in her arms are pictured by Mary and the Infant Christ. So Mithra, the divine incarnation of the Greeks, had a holy mother. Surely, the ideas of Christianity are only reflections of the ancient deities, a little higher and more spiritualized.”

“This is the view of the Roman priests,” replied Ambrose. “It was necessary to conform to the ancient theories. The world could not receive too great a revolution all at once. Therefore, they dressed up the old ideas in new garments, for as knowledge increased, men required something more spiritual. Therefore, the Romans have drawn a spiritual Christ to fit in with the

advancing times. Thus it has ever been, and will be, until the Deity reveals His plans and designs in creation, or men discover them by fearless research."

"But," hastily said Spenata, "we must not induce men to this search, for if they begin to investigate, our power is gone, and we must find some other occupation."

"Aye, that will never do." said Ambrose. "I am for transplanting the new Roman ideas to this Kingdom of Savelona; To do this we cannot make too much of the recent deliverance of Angelus and the appearance of the three holy ones."

"But," interrupted one of the old priesthood, "you do not really believe that the three men were Enoch, Moses, and Elijah? Only the ignorant can swallow this."

"No," replied Ambrose. "I do not believe it, but as the ignorant do, that is sufficient, and as to so assert will tend to good we will let it pass and make capital of it for the spread of this religion of truth."

The old Priest looked cunningly upon Ambrose as he replied:

"Oh, a pious fraud! Methinks there are many such abroad."

"Whatever is for the general good is right," replied Ambrose. "The end justifies the means."

Angelus had listened with feelings of deepest pain to this conversation. He was one of those nobly sincere and earnest men who are the supports of Christianity, not by their creeds, but through their firm convictions and noble lives. They speak from the emotions of their hearts, induced by early training, and live the highest lives.

In early youth he had been hedged around by all Christian influences. His mother had raised his infant hands in prayer to the Holy Christ and the Holy Mother. She had kissed him into religion and rocked it into him in her arms of love. She was beautiful in life, and he took his faith from her. He received the belief without investigation, and it had grown with his growth.

"These ideas," said Angelus, with earnestness, "are foreign to my thoughts. I love the truth and nothing justifies a departure from it. Can good come out of evil?"

"And yet," retorted Ambrose, "you are satisfied to hear of your deliverance as providential, and tacitly sanction the idea that the real Enoch, Moses, and Elijah appeared and released you."

A deep sadness came over the face of the young missionary. His conscience accused him of complicity in this alleged fraud. But he had not fully made up his mind how to view the matter. This was observable from his reply:

"Ambrose, I have not fully made up my mind as to these three men. We know that Enoch and Elijah passed to Heaven without dying, and the fate of Moses is uncertain. We also know that Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount. Why then should they not return to earth to aid in the spread of the religion they came to support at the transfiguration?"

"We may believe anything supernatural in the past," replied Ambrose. "But the appearance of the three men is in the present. You have seen them in the flesh; you saw them row the boat, and heard their hard breathing, and have seen the sweat come from their pores with the effort, and heard them speak like mortals. And

they gave you an earthly pipe to call them for further guidance. This you sounded, but they answered not. Truly, you cannot believe that these men are anything but mortal. Therefore, they are frauds, or we are if we sanction and proclaim them holy ones from Heaven."

"If this be your opinion, Ambrose," replied Angelus, with fervor, I will never be a party to perpetuate fraud."

"Then, what are you when you come from Rome to perpetuate Christianity without seeking for the proofs?" answered Ambrose. "Have you searched into the history of your faith?" Have you proved the resurrection of your Christ? What trouble have you taken, Angelus, to give reasons for your faith? If, then, you are prepared to believe the greater wonders without research, why stop at such a slight thing as asserting your belief in the three holy ones? Nay, man, never shrink from such a slight thing when it is for the good of the heathen land!"

And Spenata added his views, and said:

"When you have so long kept silence, Angelus, and allowed the idea to go forth that these were heavenly visitors, how can you now turn 'round and state them only mortal? No, matters must go on as they have begun."

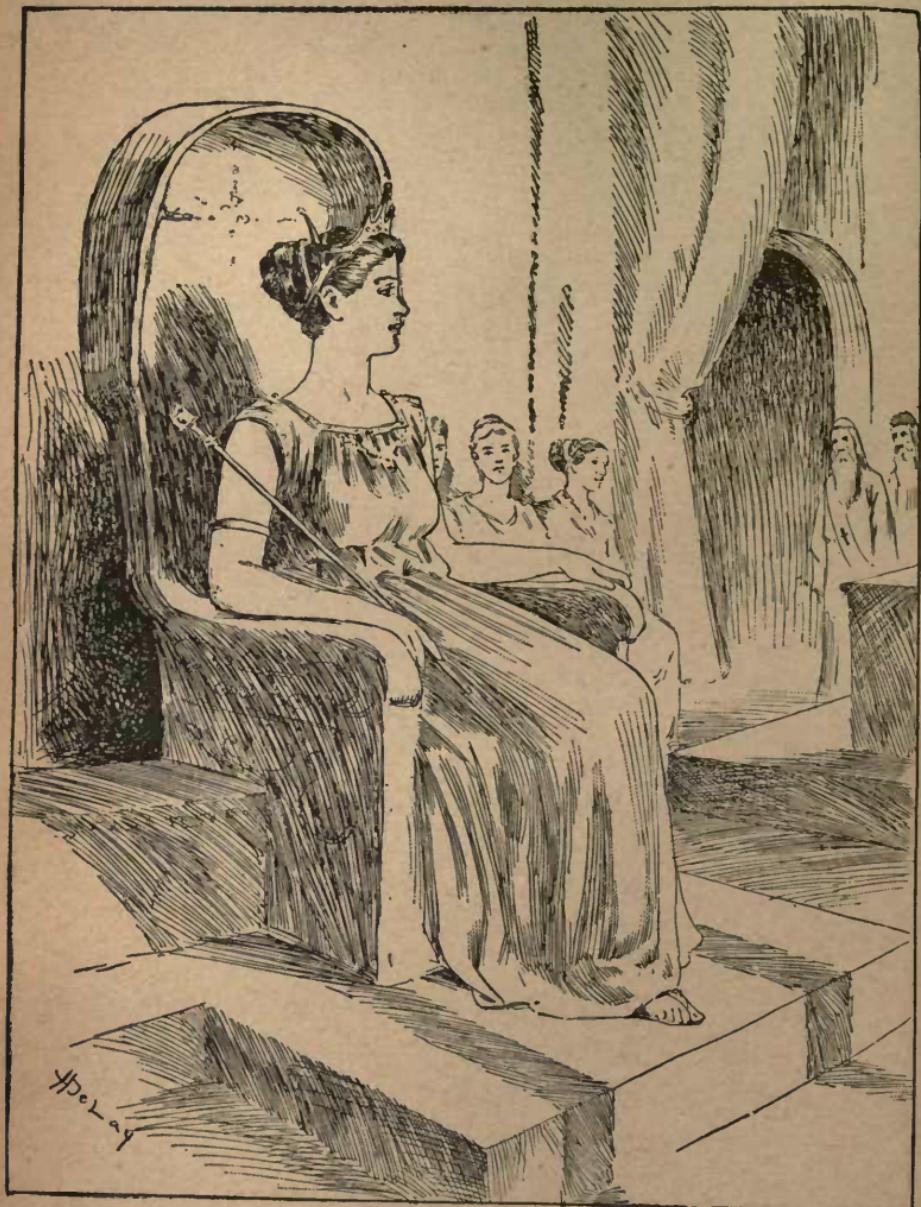
Angelus was deeply moved. He desired the spread of the faith he adopted in childhood, and which was consecrated to his heart by the sweetest reminiscences, yet he was sincere and truthful and shrank from the appearance of falsehood, and, therefore, replied:

"Brothers Spenata and Ambrose and all, I here declare that before I further proclaim the doctrines of Christianity I will fully investigate the history of the times in which these things took place. If this research confirms

my faith, then I will never cease to publish it abroad, but if not, I will expose it and devote my life to the attempt."

"I wish you joy," sneeringly said Spenata. "Long ere you can accomplish your investigation Christianity will have taken such a hold upon the people that nothing can shake it. It will have got into the blood, imbibed by the mother's milk and kissed into growth by the mother's love, and become consecrated by usage. But it is useless to prolong this meeting and we will adjourn.





THERE SHE SAT IN ALI. HER YOUTHFUL LOVELINESS. See p. 143.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE GRIEF OF SERAPTA.—THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS.

While these matters were going on at Savelona the Princess Serapta had reached the Gardens of Sordello and was informed that she had arrived too late, as the Queen and Prince Benoni had started in the royal barge some days before.

The shock was partly broken by Plenena, who felt a sympathy for this lovely woman. The singer had closely noted Benoni and divined that he had not returned the Queen's deep passion, yet for some unknown cause had concealed his marriage.

"I am truly sorry for you, Princess," said Plenena, "but the case is not so sad as might at first sight appear. I believe the Queen was really afraid of her father. She knew his violent temper and reproached herself for her neglect in not sending to the Sacred Island after him. Then the Queen was informed of the crowning of Costanza, and that Spenata would take a deadly revenge on both herself and Prince Benoni. What so natural as that they should flee together? Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and the Prince knew not that you were in Savelona. He expected you were safely unknown in the Sacred Island."

Serapta clung to the lovely singer and blessed her as an angel of light. Matters appeared clear to the Princess.

"I know," she said, "that my husband would not be unfaithful to me. My mind recalls his years of love and his sadness when we parted. It was all my doing. I could not longer bear the thoughts of our parents' grief. I saw my mother bowed down with sorrow and my father's

hair changed to gray, mourning for us, and I besought him to go to Constantinople and console them. And he has gone thither, embracing the opportunity afforded him by the Queen's flight from her kingdom. All will be well and we shall soon hear from him."

Thus she consoled herself and knew not that he had started without waiting for her. Truly love is blind.

Yet, at times, a sadness would steal over her. She walked through the royal gardens and was forcibly reminded of the happy hours passed with Benoni on the Sacred Island when all was so lovely and his strong arm supported her, and his words of deep love made music with the breeze and the soft refrain of the waves borne onward from the shore.

"Alas," she mused, "when will those happy days return? How can I bear my life, Benoni, waiting for thee? Thou art my love, my life, my all! Deep mystery of our being, our first, our only love. And some would say that thou art false! Sooner would I doubt myself than doubt thee, my beloved Benoni! Never, never can thou be ought but true, my dearly loved one!"

And thus the days passed and the sweetness of the Princess made a lasting impression on Plenena. They sauntered through the Royal gardens and took long drives into the open country. There was no fear of Serapta making her escape. She thought of nothing but patiently waiting for her love to come for her. She was glad to be away from Spenata, for at times he had frightened her by his looks.

And Plenena sang to her those love songs that she knew so well. And the days were sweet in memories of the beauteous, sympathetic past. Alas, if they could

only continue. But matters were getting more settled in Savelona and the Priest was beginning to think that he could be spared to work his own evil ways.

Harlez had returned and reported to Spenata the safe arrival of the Princess at Sordello and that the maids of honor had been conveyed to the outlying fortress.

“And now,” said Harlez, “I ask your consent to my marriage with Plenena and our appointment as stewards of the Royal gardens at Sordello according to your promise. The Princess is there and Plenena has obtained her fullest confidence. She sings to her and cheers her by her company. Noble Spenata, I ask your consent and the approval of the Queen.”

“So it shall be, Harlez, and I will shortly return with you and celebrate your marriage. But first I must be Archbishop. Yours shall be the first Christian marriage. Truly, a fair specimen of the advance of civilization!”

And the ex-Priest of Heaven sneered at the religion he was founding, and this sneer worked to his prejudice in the sensitive mind of his listener.

“Would that all minds and every love were as pure as mine and Plenena’s,” said Harlez, looking keenly at the Priest.

“Ah, well, Harlez, I hope you may be happy. You are in the spring-time of youth, and yours is the gushing age. Do your duty as my steward and you shall not go unrewarded. But I must away to complete my new dignity. Fancy, I shall be called ‘Your Grace,’ and ‘My Lord.’ Truly this new religion of Heaven has as many decorations and attractions as Druidism. When next I see you, Harlez, I shall be ‘Your Grace,’ and you will be Steward of Sordello. Adieu.”

Thus the hypocrite passed onward to complete the sacrilege of becoming the greatest religious authority in the land while in his heart burnt vile lusts for another's wife.

The old priests of heaven were, with Ambrose, waiting the attendance of Spenata. They had decided to appoint him Archbishop of Savelona, and Ambrose, who had been present at the consecrations in Rome and Constantinople, was the leading spirit in the assembly.

They were all clothed in white garments over which hung a clean, white band of satin emblazoned by a cross. These crosses had for centuries been held in veneration, and even the ancient Egyptian priests wore them on their vestments.

Then, there were chorister-boys, also robed in white, and bearing in their hands the image of the cross. They chanted the Roman liturgy as they walked from the vestry to the church, recently renovated with images of the Virgin Mother and the dying Christ. Each as he entered bowed the knee and touched the little well of holy water, and made the sign of the cross, and the leaders moved the sweet incense amongst the assembled people.

Truly, it was an imposing ceremony calculated to strike awe into the common people. The new Queen was there sitting on the right hand of the altar on a raised throne. She was covered with pearls and precious stones and wore a crown which sparkled with jewels as she turned toward the sun.

Her maids of honor and the officers of State sat near the Queen, and in front of the altar and to the left were

the wealthy citizens and the men of influence from the adjoining towns.

Christianity had been well received. It spoke of peace and rest, and men were weary of the shedding of blood. Therefore, Savelona was full of visitors, and a festal day was ever in high esteem by all classes. It was something to break the monotony of their lives. A something out of the common every day sort of routine. Besides the populace were to see the new Queen already renowned for her beauty and sweetness of disposition. And there she sat in all her youthful loveliness. A close observer could trace a shade of sadness on her face, but that only added to her queenly stateliness.

And now the procession has passed through the church, and the priests, with Ambrose at their head, are kneeling around the altar.

Ambrose read the opening prayer for Heavenly grace on the new Archbishop that he might diligently preach the word and duly administer godly discipline throughout the Kingdom of Savelona, and the other priests and the people said, Amen.

Then others of the priests read extracts from the Christian writings, and Ambrose standing forth with Spenata presented him to the Queen and priests and people, saying:

“Most noble Queen, we present Spenata, your royal father, to be Archbishop of this kingdom, and we, the Priests of High Heaven, assent to be ruled by him in all matters spiritual, and beseech your Majesty to ratify the appointment.”

Costanza, rising from her throne, extended over her father the royal sceptre, saying:

"I confirm this appointment and hereby ratify Spenata, Archbishop of my kingdom, and may Heaven bless this new religion."

She spake softly but clearly and each word was heard in the great stillness that prevailed throughout the assembly.

Spenata, with the priests, returned to the altar, and the new Archbishop, standing before the people, said:

"In the name of the High God of Heaven and earth, I, Spenata, voluntarily chosen Archbishop of this kingdom, do profess the most holy Christian religion as believed in by the ancient Apostles of our Lord in Jerusalem and Rome and so transmitted through the Bishop, Ambrose, to this kingdom. And I hereby solemnly promise due reverence and obedience to my Chief and Head, the Holy God, Jesus, who died on Calvary to redeem the world. So, help me God. Amen."

Then the Archbishop knelt, and spreading forth his hands over the people prayed for Heaven's blessing to rest on the kingdom and the people and the Church and all in authority.

Thus, as in many cases since this time, the wicked Spenata was appointed the chosen of Heaven to administer the Christian faith, and rule the consciences of the people.

His heart was full of lust, and his life of all things hateful, and yet he was presented to the poor hungering souls as the Oracle of Deity.

Being thus duly appointed and ratified by the Queen as Archbishop, he proceeded to appoint Ambrose and Angelus and several of the old priests as bishops of different

districts of the Kingdom of Savelona, and a similar ceremony was gone through, but Spenata took the initiative.

There had been considerable discussion in private assembly as to Angelus. It was doubtful whether he could fully answer the questions submitted, and he had some doubts himself as to his ability to do so. But he studied carefully the form of consecration of bishops brought over by Ambrose, and decided that he could truthfully comply with the consecration forms. In fact he reasoned that it was his duty to accept the responsibility of searching for a perfect understanding of the holy scriptures.

When, therefore, the Archbishop proceeded to examine the priests he was able to answer without any mental reservation.

The examination then proceeded something like this:

The Archbishop prayed for the illumination of all bishops by the veritable truths of God, and that each bishop might execute his office to the edifying of the Church, and the honor, praise and glory of His great name.

Then the archbishop prayed that the Almighty would mercifully behold each bishop, and replenish him with the truth, adorning his life with innocence and purity of thought, word and action.

And Angelus, to each prayer, devoutly and sincerely said, Amen.

Then the Archbishop, sitting in his spiritual chair of State, said to Angelus:

"Brother Angelus, beloved of Heaven and providentially cared for and watched over, art thou persuaded that thou art truly called to the ministration of bishop by the will of Deity, and the order of this realm?"

And Angelus, looking with eyes suffused by tears to Heaven, and with a halo surrounding him, answered:

“I am so persuaded.”

“And art thou persuaded, by God’s Holy Spirit, to call upon the Almighty by prayer for the true understanding of His will, and to search diligently the Christian scriptures, and; as thou art taught by God, wilt thou so teach and instruct the people and the priests under thee?”

And again Angelus looked reverently up to Heaven, and kneeling, raised his hands upward, and with deep feeling answered:

“I will so do, by the help of God. Teach me, Almighty Father, according to Thy promise where it is written, ‘All shall be taught of Thee.’ ”

“And art thou ready, Brother Angelus, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust, and live the true Christian life so far as the Almighty shall teach thee?”

And again the pure and truthful missionary reverently replied: “I will do so, by the help of the Almighty, and as He shall teach me by His Holy Spirit.”

And in like manner answered all the bishops.

Then the wicked Archbishop, standing up from his consecrating chair, raised his vile eyes to heaven, and prayed:

“Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, the Searcher of all hearts, Thou, who knowest the inmost thoughts and aspirations of the mind, grant unto these, Thy bishops, strength and power to perform these promises which they have made in Thy presence. Enable them diligently and prayerfully to search all holy writings. Impart unto their intellects clear discernment, sound judgment, and

discretion. Guide and direct them at all times by Thy Holy Spirit, and teach them Thyself, according to Thy promises. Amen."

Then the bishops put on the rest of the Episcopal habit, and kneeling down, the Archbishop led off the singing, which was taken up by the bishops and choristers, all kneeling:

"Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire.  
Enable with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight."

And some of the bishops inwardly felt that they were "blind leaders of the blind," yet they also felt they could join in the response when the Archbishop said:

"Lord, hear our prayer."

Answering: "And let our cry come unto Thee."

Thus, as in times before and since, Heaven looked on and made no sign, and men were left to search out truth. But, as before and since, the Archbishop and the Bishop, Ambrose, laid their hands, all soiled as they were, upon the heads of the elected bishops, who knelt before the two men, the Archbishop saying to each bishop:

"Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands."

Then handing the bible to each bishop, the Archbishop said:

"Give heed unto reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Think upon the things contained in this book, and in the

sacred writings of all nations. Be not led hastily away by fanaticism and superstition, but be guided by the voice of Deity and reason, His greatest gift. Receive nothing repugnant to reason. Prove all things, and be not afraid to proclaim the conclusions that prayer and research shall establish to you, as truth. Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf. Work with your own hands for your living as did the Apostles of old, so will men believe in your sincerity. Feed the poor, devour them not, nor lay heavy burdens upon them in this life to save their souls in the life hereafter. Be charitable and do not make yourselves your brothers' keepers. Remember, each one stands or falls to his God alone. Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost and depraved. Be merciful. Be pure. Be chaste. Be noble. Be heavenly. So shall your ministry be blessed by the Almighty, and who you absolve shall be absolved. Attempt not to bind the souls of men to your own creeds, but in all holy life and conversation win them to the Church, and curse not."

Then, for the first time in this heathen land, the Archbishop and bishops, with the Queen and others as appointed, partook of the sacrament, and in the presence of the people took the consecrated wafer.

"What are they doing?" whispered one to his neighbor.

"Eating their god," was the reply.

"Nay, surely, tomfoolery has not come to this, already?"

Thus conversed the untrained heathens on the most sacred rite of Christianity, for they had heard that in the

wafer were the veritable body and blood of Christ, the God of the Christians.

The communion over, the Archbishop again raised his unholy eyes and hands to heaven, and in accents solemn, prayed:

“ Most merciful Father, teach Thy servants so to live that they may be a wholesome example in word, in conversation, in love, in chastity, in charity, and in purity. And the peace which passeth understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and love of universal brotherhood, and the blessing of the Almighty remain with you always.”

Thus passed one of the greatest days in Savelona, long remembered after Church and State were firmly united.

On the following Sabbath, the first prayer was for the Queen. That she might have long life and health and wealth. But not a word was uttered for the dethroned Queen now exposed to the perils of the deep.

“ SHE IS STILL IN THIS WORLD.”

But Ivena cared not for her lost kingdom. She had taken with her considerable wealth and lived in hope that Benoni would return her ardent passion.

They were thrown in close communion. Benoni shrank from informing Ivena of his marriage. He delayed doing so until they reached Constantinople, as if earlier disclosed the Queen might have commanded her officers to land the Prince on a desert island where no fair Serapta would be present to cheer and console and comfort him.

They sat on the deck and watched the setting sun to-

gether, and the men knew not but that they were lovers. The pair were therefore left much alone and Ivena sought by every art to ensnare the one she so fondly loved.

"Benoni," said Ivena, as they went below for the night, "will it be always thus? Have you no thought for me?" And thus saying she cast herself down, and let her dark hair hang around his knees, and the soft light of night enveloped her as she poured out her passionate thoughts.

"You are the light of my life, Benoni," and the words were breathed softly as she partially arose and sat by his side letting her head sink gently on his breast. "I have forsaken all for you, Benoni, and yet you are cold as the falling snow. Will you not take me in your arms and comfort me?"

And he not yielding to her wishes, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. He repulsed her not, and yet he did not yield nor return her embrace, but gently laid her on the couch, saying:

"I take your kiss, Ivena, as from sister to brother. Thus only can we be. I shall thus ever view you. Oh, Ivena, ask not for more, for more I cannot give. But all that a brother can do I will do for you, Ivena."

He spoke so gently, yet with such deep feeling in his voice, that she felt a sweet calm run through her frame.

"Ah, Benoni, you are greater in mind than I am. Were I a man I fear I should have fallen under such embraces. Alas, what must you think of me? But, O, Benoni, I love you stronger and deeper than sister can love brother. And some time, when I have met your friends, and learned more of your faith, and become more worthy of you, a warmer feeling will grow up between us. Will it not be so, Benoni?"

“Do not dwell on this, Ivena. It has become a passion with you. The women of our people are not thus. But you are a Queen and have Spanish blood in you, and I will look upon what has passed as the proper affection of sister and brother. Will you sleep now, or shall we converse ?”

“Leave me, Benoni, and may Heaven send your pure soul refreshing sleep. Wake me early that we may see the sun rise in the east. That glorious orb of day so dear to the mind of your nation. And if I have offended your nice sense of delicacy, set it down to my Spanish blood and queenly arrogance. I will try not to offend again. Yet do not banish hope, for otherwise I am wholly undone. Will you not kiss me as a brother, Benoni ?”

And the Prince, stooping over the prostrate form, kissed her on the brow and left her to repose.

Thus the days and weeks passed and the pair approached their destination. Ivena had got no nearer to Benoni’s heart. It was filled entirely by Serapta, and the arts of Ivena were wasted. Yet, so gently did he repulse her advances that there was no open breach between them. And Ivena still hoped. The captain announced that they were nearing the great city of Constantinople. The men were all excitement, and Benoni looked anxiously forward and wondered what tidings he would learn of those so dear to him.

Ivena, too, partook of the feeling that pervaded those on board the ship. She walked the deck and talked excitedly to Benoni and the captain, asking questions as to the landing and the customs and habits of the people.

“Benoni, if I had not you with me how sad and lonely

I should have been. But our voyage has been to me like a long and pleasant holiday. And now we come to civilized life, and you will join your friends, and I shall be forgotten."

"Nay, Ivena, say not so," replied the Prince. "My friends will welcome you as my sister and dear friend. I will present you to the Emperor, and if my parents are here they will gladly make you a home. Hope whispers that they are in the city, along with others equally dear."

Benoni's face beamed with health and happiness, and as Ivena looked upon his animated countenance a feeling of jealousy stirred within her breast. Yet it soon disappeared, for he had been so kind and thoughtful. True, she was no nearer attaining the wishes of her heart, but hope was not extinguished.

"I may yet attract and please this noble man," she mused. "His mind must be far above mine, hence the reason I have not found favor in his eyes. But I will cultivate nobility and by and by I shall reap the reward."

But the time was approaching when Benoni felt he could not longer delay communicating the true position of matters. Therefore, when the anchor was cast and some of the men had landed in the harbor, he drew her aside and told her of Serapta.

"Ivena, before we proceed further I think it right to inform you of circumstances which I could not well reveal earlier. In early life I was betrothed to one of earth's most lovely women, and this was followed by our marriage."

"Your marriage, Benoni! And you never told me this, nor spoke of her who had passed away from earth."

"She is still in this world—" began Benoni. But

Ivena hastily interrupted him, and fierce anger spread over her beautiful features.

“And you have deceived me all these months, Benoni ! Alas, can I ever believe in man again ? And I have thought you so noble. So exalted above the rest of your race. And now, what is left for me but to die ? And you, who, throughout, have treated me with scorn and deceived me, shall die too.”

And she hastily drew from her side a keen dagger and held up her arm to strike it to his heart. But Benoni was quicker than her movement, and arrested it in mid-air and held it there, seizing her other hand as in a vice.

“Ivena,” he said, speaking low and gentle as a brother to an erring sister, “this cannot be. Our lives are not our own. We are sent hither to live out our full time. Self-destruction is the greatest sin. Would you hurry to your Creator before your time arrives ? I have not heedlessly deceived you. You have deceived yourself. In what have I wronged you ? I esteemed you as a brother and entertain the same feeling now. Calm yourself, Ivena, and come with me to the Emperor’s court. We shall there get news of my friends, and perhaps find my mother here.”

The passing anger fled and left Ivena helpless on the couch. Benoni sat beside her, and took her hand, and raising it to his lips, continued:

“Think not that life is ended, Ivena. There is one now who is disconsolate, mourning your loss. He will doubtless follow here and you will reward his devotion by your love.”

“No one, Benoni, loves me thus. Who cares for the exiled Queen of Savelona ! You are seeking to insult

me, Benoni. Go to your wife. She waits to embrace you.

"Alas, Ivena," sorrowfully replied Benoni, "my wife is not in Constantinople."

"Not here, hastily said Ivena. Then why have you come with me? Is she in Savelona? If so, you will have broken her heart, for all will say we have fled together as lovers."

"But, Ivena, my wife is not in Savelona. She is on the Sacred Island, watched over by the holy ones."

"Watched over, rather, by the Priest," said Ivena. "He has been on the Island and will have left there his serpent-trail. Depend upon it, Benoni, your wife has been induced to join you at Savelona, and now she will believe you false."

Benoni had never imagined such a state of things and his mind was greatly troubled. Yet he felt Serapta would never believe him false to his marriage vows.

"You know not my wife, Ivena, or you would never think she would believe me false. We have never had a thought unknown to the other. Our wishes and desires have always been the same. No, Ivena, my wife will believe in me, and wait my arrival, and greet me with confidence and joy."

Ivena looked wonderingly upon the animated face of Benoni, and musing, said:

"How beautiful is true love! It thinketh no evil! It believes all things, except falsehood in the lover's vows. And thus, Benoni, you may slumber in your paradise of love, but there will be an awakening. You know not the power and wiles of Spenata, nor how

beauty draws out his passions. He is relentless in his love as he is revengeful in his hate. Ah, might it not have been well if you had killed him on the Rock of Sacrifice. You may live to repent your mercy.”

And Ivena spoke with such force and close knowledge of the Priest that Benoni shivered, and a deep sadness came over his face.”

“But this cannot be, Ivena. And again, they may have never met. Your imagination leads you astray. I will dismiss the thoughts you have tried to implant in my mind as idle vagaries and return as soon as possible to the Sacred Island where I shall find my wife and Monica reposing in peaceful solitude undisturbed by wicked men,”

“Never more, Benoni, will you find your wife. My father, who is all-powerful in Savelona, will place her where you cannot find her.”

“Our hearts are one,” replied Benoni, “and her’s will be the magnet drawing me to her. Wherever she is or may be, I shall find her. The Creator will never separate permanently such love as ours. We are but one in thought, in mind, in soul. Dear Serapta, how I love thee!”

And Benoni’s face looked entranced, and Ivena gazed on him with wonder and surprise.

“And is this man’s love?” And think you that Orlando loves me thus, Benoni?”

“Yea, noble Queen,” he replied, “I doubt not that he loves you truly. His soul is noble and so, therefore, must his love be. He will follow you, Ivena, and you, too, shall be helped by a devotion greater than I could give.”

The young Parsee here touched a chord in the soul of Ivena that vibrated through her entire frame. She had longed for deep love. Her face gradually lost its sadness, and Benoni saw her soul was awoke to gentler feelings. "And you will come with me, Ivena," said he, "and we will find my parents, and you shall stay with them until Orlando comes for you." Ivena shook her head, and sorrowfully replied: "This may not be, Benoni. It must not be known that we came this long voyage together. I will land you here and rely upon your discretion to keep our secret. I will proceed to Rome, and there await any message from Orlando, should he deem me worthy of pursuit. But, alas, I fear I have lost you both!" A deep sense of loneliness came over her. What was there to live for? Only a fleeting idea that Orlando would not believe her false. She could not return to her kingdom. Her place would already be filled by her sister.

"Farewell, Benoni," said the Queen, with deep feeling. "And sometime, when the twilight steals gently o'er the earth, think of the lonely one who loved you, alas, too well!"

And Benoni, deeply moved, took the fair form in his arms and kissed her brow, and said: "Farewell, Ivena! As a sister I shall ever love you, and pray that Heaven may bless you."

Thus they parted, and, Ivena, summoning Captain Andrius, gave her directions to land the Prince and then proceed to Rome.

The old man looked sadly on his mistress, wondering at the change of destination, and set it down to a lovers' quarrel and woman's caprice.





"FAREWELL, IVENA!" See p. 156.

## CHAPTER XI.

TRUE LOVE CROWNS THE BISHOP.—THE PRINCESS  
ABDUCTED.

In the palace grounds of Savelona sat a group of friends conversing in the cool of the evening. The new Queen, Costanza, was there, with the singer Plenena and her affianced husband, Harlez.

“And is all ready for the marriage?” said the Queen to Plenena. “I am glad it is to take place in the capital. Alas, my sister will not be here!”

And as she spoke a tear came into her eye and a sadness stole over her. She loved her imperious sister. Costanza was so gentle that she thought it wrong to reign in place of her who so long had taken the lead in her father’s plans. Neither could she understand the bitterness of her father’s anger. She had mourned him as one dead and rejoiced when he returned to the court in health and strength. But the High Priest, while he caressed Costanza, vowed vengeance on his elder daughter for her gross neglect.

Ivena, however, had saved his reputation and injured her own by flying with Benoni. There were many shrugs of the shoulders and quiet insinuating smiles when her name was mentioned. And now, as Costanza referred to her sister, many smiled, and one, who had aspired to her hand in past time, said:

“Your sister is otherwise engaged, noble Queen. She has chosen her Prince and fled with him to parts unknown.”

“But,” said Monica, “you are mistaken. Benoni’s wife accompanied them. I was present when Harlez

brought the message from her husband to join him at Sordello to accompany them in the Queen's barge to Constantinople."

"And has Serapta gone with Prince Benoni and the Queen?" inquired Orlando, and gladness came into his face, and a great joy took possession of his soul.

"I have no doubt they all three voyaged together," replied Monica, "and ere this have safely arrived in the city of Constantinople and been welcomed by their friends as waifs of the sea. Theirs is a most romantic story and a true love episode in real life. If ever love was faithful it is so with Prince Benoni and his wife."

"I am glad to hear this news," said Orlando, "for it makes two noble lives happy and frees the Queen from a false position. Are you not pleased, Costanza, that your sister's fair fame is thus cleared from suspicion?"

"I should be highly gratified if I were certain that the Princess Serapta arrived in time to depart with my sister and the Prince. Yet I remember the news of Serapta's departure did not give time for her to reach Sordello in time to go with them," replied Costanza somewhat sadly.

"But such was intended, was it not, Costanza?" anxiously inquired Orlando. "The Princess started with that intent, did she not?"

"Of that," replied Monica, "there is no doubt. The message came from the Prince, and with it a valuable ring, which, oft before, the lovers had arranged as a token between them."

"There is many a slip between the cup and the lip," said the young soldier who had opened the conversation, "and a little bird whispers that the adage proved true in

this case, and that the Princess is left alone to pine in solitude. What say you, Steward Harlez?"

"I say," replied Harlez with heat, "that you are mixing in matters that concern you not. The Queen's father will have a crow to pick with you if you allow your foolish tongue to wag so freely and publicly. You had better produce the Princess if you desire so anxiously to satisfy your jealous mind by blackening the late Queen's character."

The young man thus addressed thought it prudent not to prolong the conversation, but he noticed a paleness come over the singer, and that Plenena parted her lips as though to speak, yet closed them without doing so.

"I am right," he thought, "the Queen and Benoni went alone, and the Princess is at Sordello under the charge of Harlez and Plenena. But I will soon make sure of this."

The young man's attention was diverted, for as he looked around he observed Spenata standing between Harlez and Plenena. The Archbishop had just entered, and heard the reply made by Harlez, and noted the changing countenance of the singer.

"Ah," thought Spenata, "I have come in time to stop this nonsense. I will put a spoke in that young man's wheel which will drive him to a very different scene," and a dark scowl passed over his features. This quickly passed and looking at the young soldier, he said:

"Captain Martel, I have a mission for you. Attend me shortly in my reception room."

Then directing his keen eyes on Harlez and the singer, he continued:

"I have fixed the third watch to celebrate your nup-

tials. Be at the cathedral of the Holy Virgin at that time with your friends. And you, Bishops Angelus and Ambrose, be ready to assist me with the services. Let it be well made known abroad, as I would have the cathedral filled to witness the first Christian marriage."

Then, without further ceremony, he touched Harlez on the shoulder, and the two left the grounds together, followed by Martel.

As they walked the Archbishop spoke to Harlez:

"Tell me Harlez, how you left the Princess? Is she well? Has sadness or anger taken possession of her soul?"

"Serapta," replied the steward, "will not think any ill of her husband. She fully believes he sent the message and the ring, and that circumstances compelled the Queen and Benoni to put out to sea before she could reach them. Nothing seems to shake her faith, and generally she is happy, although at times a sad expression steals o'er her face."

"Any other woman would be prepared to kill herself for jealousy or seek consolation in another passion. I will try her soon," said Spenata. "In the meantime it will be necessary to send her to some more secure retreat for that fool, Martel, has gone and aroused suspicion in the minds of her friends. Is there any likelihood of Angelus and Monica being married soon? If so, that might be made the occasion for getting the Princess from the Royal gardens."

"I believe," replied Harlez, "that the Bishop has some religious scruples, and this is the real cause of the delay."

"Such nonsense," said Spenata. "Surely the Creator knew what was the best for mankind when he implanted

love and the passions in our breasts. But man, ever ready to believe his knowledge greater than his Maker's, has foolishly invented this unnatural idea of celibacy for the priesthood. We will not, however, tolerate it in Savelona, and if I can overcome the scruples of Serapta I will set the example of marriage and so establish it in this kingdom."

And as the Archbishop ceased to speak a silence fell over the pair. Harlez was wondering as to the Princess and her probable destination, and Spenata was dwelling on her beauty, and the best means of accomplishing his purpose. At last he said:

"Harlez, I fancy your future wife has been too communicative with the Princess. I thought she would have worked on the jealousy of Serapta and prepared her for my proposal. I will arrange for the future, but you return and bring me a specimen of Monica's handwriting. I have use for it."

And thereupon Harlez turned away to do his errand, while the Archbishop walked quickly forward to the appointment with Martel, who followed slowly, musing:

"What is the wretched hypocrite after now," thought the young captain. "Some deviltry, I be bound. Well, I will outwit the cunning old fox if I can."

In this amiable mood Captain Martel reported himself, and Spenata, looking keenly upon the young officer, thus addressed him:

"I want your services, Captain Martel, in an affair connected with the State and my family. I see you take an interest in the exiled Queen. It shall be your duty to track out the fugitive and report to me how matters stand. Do not hesitate to let me know that she and Benoni are

living together as man and wife. This information will smooth over State affairs, and make Costanza more reconciled to her position, and also aid other plans of mine. You understand, Martel, I am to have this news. See that it is officially reported to me with the least delay. Also let me have frequent and early intimation of Benoni's movements. I trust you fully understand my wishes, and will carry them out promptly and to the letter?"

"I understand, noble Archbishop," replied the young soldier, laying a stress upon the ecclesiastical dignity, "and will report as you wish. I will also truthfully and privately inform you of the movements of the ex-Queen and the Prince. I shall require a proper retinue to accompany me, and I had better be travelling for pleasure, unless you prefer that I represent this kingdom at the Court of Constantine, the great Emperor of Rome?"

"It will be the best," replied Spenata, "to go as the Ambassador of Queen Costanza to the Court of Constantine, and I will provide your proper credentials, signed by the Queen's seal. And as Constantine never goes anywhere without Eusebius or Lactantius, I will arrange for our ancient Priest, Akiba, to accompany you, armed with my warrant as Archbishop, to confer with the great Christian authorities at Constantinople and Rome. This will give influence with the Emperor and the bishops. They will chuckle over the extension of their religion, and we can still arrange the Christian scheme to suit ourselves. That is what these Romans did. And why should we not follow in their footsteps? It has succeeded admirably with them, and will bind the Roman Empire in superstition and ignorance for ages, but the priesthood will reap the benefit. We will follow in their

footsteps. Savelona can swallow as much religious nonsense as Rome, surely! All shall be ready for your voyage to-morrow. Adieu."

While Spenata was speaking, Akiba had come noiselessly into the room and heard the contemptuous way the Archbishop referred to the Christian religion, and when Martel had gone the Priest took the opportunity of administering a little seasonable advice.

"Noble Archbishop," said Akiba, also laying a stress on the religious title, "do you think it politic to open your private views to such young scape-graces as Martel? There may come a time when he will turn your opinions on ourselves to our temporal loss."

"I am only following in the footsteps of the great Constantine," replied Spenata. "He is not reticent in publishing his private views on the religion he has founded, and why should I be so?"

"There is no comparison, Spenata, between your position and that of the Emperor. He is but a temporal ruler, while you, Archbishop, are Vicegerent of High Heaven and the successor to Saint Peter. If you have not been born anew you need not publish forth to all the world your unfaith in your own faith."

Spenata looked angrily at the aged Priest, but a little reflection showed that Akiba was right. The Archbishop, therefore, turned the conversation to the proposed mission, saying:

"Perhaps you are right, Akiba. We priests of Heaven should only speak to the outside world of heavenly things, and in a heavenly way. But you would hear what I said about your going to the court at Constantinople and Rome? It was a sudden thought arising out of other ar-

rangements personal to myself and the state, yet mature consideration tells me it would be a good stroke of policy. It would give importance to the new religion and show us in accord with the leading civilization of our times. Nations, like individuals, are only as sheep; one leading, the others follow. What say you, Akiba, can you be ready by to-morrow to accompany Martel?"

"Akiba was an old man, and his hair was gray, and his form somewhat bent, yet ambition was not dead. He had long desired to be a leader amongst men, and during Spenata's absence had clamored for appointment of High Priest of Heaven. But nothing had come of it, and now, he thought, if he could not be the first in Savelona he would be of importance in representing the kingdom abroad.

"I can be ready to start to-morrow," replied Akiba, "but, in addition to your Archbishop's seal, it would be well for me to receive a Church dignity. I was passed over in the recent appointment of bishops. I think that omission may now gracefully be remedied, and I might be created Archbishop of Western Savelona."

Spenata heard the request with some surprise not unmixed with anger. He had received a hint of Akiba's movements during his absence, and formed a shrewd guess at the old Priest's tactics, but reasoned that he need not fear as the delegate-elect would be too far away to do any harm; Spenata, therefore, replied:

"Your request, Akiba, savors of your usual modesty, and if acceded to I fear I make an enemy of Bishop Ambrose, for he covets that appointment. Ah, well, of two evils I will choose the least. If Ambrose were appointed he would be here to dictate and interfere with

my plans, while you would go away at once. Am I to understand clearly, Akiba, that if appointed to-morrow to both posts you leave in the afternoon with Martel? Weigh well your reply as upon it rests your Archbishopric of Western Savelona."

"I believe," piously replied Akiba, "that if appointed to these two posts I could be of great service to our holy religion by proceeding at once to the great Christian realm and learning all the new truths. Yes, I will start to-morrow afternoon, if duly appointed to both posts early in the day."

"It shall be as you desire," said Spenata, "but you need not have gone out of your way, Akiba, to express yourself in such a sanctimonious manner. Leave that for the uninitiated multitude, it is wasted on an old religious stage-player like me. We know each other too well for that, eh, Akiba?"

And the two representatives of Heaven chuckled over their little sanctimonious farce like two school-boys trying to deceive the master, but they only deceived themselves.

Thus it was arranged that these two great events should come off the following day after the marriage ceremony, and it was to be noised abroad as much as possible that Akiba, the new Archbishop, was to be the delegate to the greatecclesiastical union.

While these events, so momentous to the spread of Christianity were proceeding, a very different scene was taking place in the palace grounds.

The Queen continued to look sorrowful. Orlando was anxious to know more. Marcel and the Duke de Bismantua (Benoni's brother), were equally desirous to get at the bottom of the mystery. Marcel, particularly, was

wishful to redeem his promise to Mona, the sister of Serapta. While Angelus was meditating on his scruples as to his marriage with Monica which had been brought into prominence by the proposed union of Harlez and Plenena on the following day.

The conversation was renewed by Marcel remarking:

"I fully believed that the Princess Serapta had accompanied the Queen and Prince Benoni, but now, it would appear I was misinformed. Has your Majesty any immediate means of putting the matter fully at rest? I promised Serapta's sister that I would bring back her sister. Noble Queen," added the young man with deep feeling, "by the love you bear your sister, aid me in restoring the sweetest woman to those who love her so well. The lovely Mona speaks to you through me, and implores you to restore Serapta to her embraces."

And as Marcel uttered these words his face was illumined by earnest love for Mona, and his eyes shone deep with devotion for the cause of his journey. The Queen looked kindly on his animated countenance as she replied:

"Noble Prince, I would assist you if I could, and if all here vow eternal secrecy, perhaps Plenena can aid us in our search."

All were friendly to the Princess and readily gave the desired promise and earnestly besought the singer to reveal what she knew of Serapta.

Thus appealed to the true woman came forth in the heart of Plenena, and she thus replied:

"Noble Queen, in accordance with your request, and relying on your Majesty's protection and the vows of secrecy given, I answer you, although in doing so I risk the Archbishop's direst wrath, and in any event must

beg that no step, whatever, be taken until after my marriage to-morrow."

All promised this, including Marcel, for they did not imagine that Spenata would take any steps to remove the Princess from the Royal gardens, nor interfere with the stewardship of Harlez and Plenena.

Plenena, having received the required assurance, resumed: "I have for some time had the pleasing companionship of the Princess. A nobler and truer woman there cannot be. She esteems and deeply loves her husband and thinks no ill of him. She was told that circumstances prevented the Prince and the Queen from awaiting her arrival at Sordello. She, therefore, patiently awaits his return, and expresses herself as certain that he will come to carry her back to her friends."

"A true and lovely woman," said Costanza, "I would know more of her. And is she a Christian, Plenena?"

"One of the true sort," replied Plenena. "She has no doubts, and lives in thoughts of purity and Heaven. Your Majesty should hear her speak of the future life. It raises our minds higher. When I have listened, in the cool of the evening, I have expected to see the holy ones walking in the garden, But nothing has come of it."

And as the singer ceased to speak a deep sigh was heard in the garden. Plenena felt the regret of humanity when it longs for knowledge yet receives it not.

Marcel had listened closely to all the singer had said, and being desirous of acting as soon as honor to his word allowed, inquired:

"Think you, Plenena, that the Princess will wait your

return to Sordello? Or, may she make other arrangements?"

"Unless she is misled in some way." replied the singer, "I believe the Princess will remain at the Royal gardens until her husband comes for her. But there are dangers of which she is in ignorance, and as she thinks no evil, she may be induced to leave Sordello. I shall, therefore, for her sake be glad when I can return."

Plenena would have said more, but when she looked up saw near her the dark face of the Archbishop, and she hastened to turn the conversation, and Marcel and his party soon afterwards took their leave.

Angelus, taking the arm of Monica, strolled through the grounds.

"My love," he said, "as the conversation went on, I was thinking of ourselves. I have prayed sincerely for guidance, and the only answer I have received is that priests may marry. If, therefore, Monica, you are agreeable, we might be married to-morrow at the same time as Harlez and Plenena."

"Be it so, Angelus. I have never entertained any doubt as to the right of priests to marry. I will therefore be prepared by to-morrow."

Thus it was arranged, and Angelus hastened to the Archbishop. He found Spenata had no objection. In fact, the high dignitary rather gloried in defying the ideas of Rome in such matters as these.

"It is absurd," said Spenata, to suppose that the Deity objects to marriage in priests, or any one. The Creator has implanted the desire for home in the minds of His children. Celibacy is the wicked invention of mankind and leads to sin. Come then, Angelus, with Mo-

nica, and we will marry you to-morrow, and Savelona shall know that Rome shall not usurp her foolish notions over this great kingdom."

A very different scene was taking place with Marcel and his friends.

"I believe," said Marcel, "That there is not a moment to be lost in obtaining possession of Serapta. Depend upon it, the Archbishop has some plot on the way about her. Our promise ties our hands until the marriage is over, but we must leave for Sordello as soon as the ceremony is over. Are you prepared, Bismantua, to accompany me to the Royal gardens?"

"I am ready," replied the Duke, "but I must see the Queen before I depart."

"But mention not our project, Bismantua. It is the best for her to remain in ignorance, thus will she reign in peace."

"Be it as you wish," said the Duke, and as he spake his dark face took on a warmer glow. "I was about to see her on other matters."

But the young man mentioned not what the other matters were. His heart had been touched by the loveliness of the Queen. He was of a kind and gentle nature and believed he had not a kindred soul, and as he turned away to his own room for the night, hope whispered glad things.

"She is all that is lovely," he mused. "How gently she speaks, and in her dark blue eyes there dwells the noblest aspirations. Strange that she should be the daughter of such a man as Spenata. But, perhaps, he was noble and true ere his wife was taken from him. Woman is the great softening influence of the universe."

In such meditations as these, the impressionable young Duke fell asleep and gentle dreams kept alive his love.

He was astir early the following morning, and the Queen, tempted by the loveliness of the day, walked alone in the seclusion of the palace grounds.

"Ah, Duke," she said, "you are stirring early on this happy day. Have you heard the news? We are to have a double marriage. How truly Angelus and Monica love each other. Was it not beautiful how they lived and loved together on the Sacred Island? How I should like thus to live and find a kindred soul."

The young man listened entranced by the sweetness of her voice. Was there ever a more lovely form?

"Love, noble Queen," replied the Duke, "is heaven-sent. It takes possession of our souls ere we know it, and fills our lives with beauty. Alas, I have to leave this happy place and go forth into the wilderness of life and my path seems drear and lonely. When I am gone, noble Queen, will you bestow one thought on the Duke of Bismantua?"

"Must you leave us, Duke?" replied the fair girl; "all my friends forsake me. And shall you see my sister? Oh, bring her to me and she shall have her throne again."

"And what would become of you, noble Queen? Would you accept a home in a distant land if love surrounded your life?"

"Wherever love is, is happiness," replied Costanza. "I have yearned for the sweet sympathy of true affection. I would prefer to be Queen of a peaceful home, rather than reign over this powerful kingdom."

And as she spoke, the Queen raised her eyes to the

Duke, and he looked into their depths, and saw a deeper meaning in her words, and taking her hand, kissed it fondly.

“ May I, for once, call you Costanza ? ” softly said the Duke. “ I am going away, but ere I depart may I hope to have one word of sweet encouragement ? I will find your sister and bring her here, if in return you will share my distant home. My parents will welcome you, and in my father’s kingdom you will have peace and love. Oh, say, Costanza, that I may hope that you will love me as I love you.”

And the maiden, who knew not the art of coquetry, placed her hand in his and fondly said:

“ Bismantua, it shall be as you say. Bring home my sister, and then if you still care for me I will return with you to Kirma.”

And the young man took her in his arms and kissed her, saying:

“ Behold, High Heaven, the union of two hearts and lives, and send us thy blessing.”

Thus was their betrothal, and each felt a sweet, responsive thought of sympathy and pure affection, and looked not beyond.

They sauntered through the gardens and talked softly of the future days when the Duke would return to claim her hand.

The heavens were as bright as their young hopes, and shone forth with true eternal blue, and all too soon the hours passed, and the Queen was summoned to grace the dual wedding and the consecration of Akiba.

Again the procession of bishops was formed. Again the choristers chanted the songs of Heaven, and the

priests, robed in white, spread the sweet perfume of incense amongst the people. Again the Archbishop raised his soiled hands to heaven and prayed.

And being such a solemn occasion, and desiring to give the dual marriage the greatest publicity, the Queen attended in State and acted as bridesmaid to Monica.

And the Archbishop himself made the inquiries of Angelus and Monica, and addressing the Bishop, said:

“Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor her, and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?”

And Angelus, looking fondly towards Monica and with eyes turned heavenward, in a soft, clear voice replied: “I will.”

So the inquiry was in like manner addressed to Monica, and afterwards to Harlez and Plenena, and the two pairs were united for weal or woe until “death us do part” and the Creator calls the spirits unto himself.

Ah, this wonderful union of lives! Who can look into the future and say whether it shall be for weal or for woe.

Then followed the consecration of Akiba to be Archbishop of Western Savelona, and thus the morning wore away.

From the palace grounds a goodly array, led on by Marcel and the Duke de Bismantua, took quickly the way to Sordello, as soon as the marriage ceremony was over, and slacked not their speed until the Royal gardens were reached.

Alonso sounded his trumpet and the gate-keeper attended to know who sought admittance.

"We come," said Marcel, "from the court of Savelona to see the Princess Serapta. Her brother, the Duke of Bismantua, and myself and this goodly company have travelled far to meet her. Announce the Duke and his sister's friend, Marcel."

"The Princess is not here," replied the gate-keeper, "she left to attend the marriage of her friends, the Bishop Angelus and Monica."

"But," replied Marcel, greatly troubled, "we have come direct from Savelona, and seen nothing of her. Are you certain that she purposed to attend the wedding?"

"Thus I was informed as she left early in the day. The wedding has just taken place, has it not?"

"Yes, that is so," replied Marcel, "but we saw nothing of the Princess, nor heard that she had reached the Court. We will away again to Savelona and trust to meet her there."

"Will not you and the Duke and company stay to take refreshment and rest your horses?" inquired the keeper.

And Marcel and the Duke conferred together. Marcel was for starting back at once, but the Duke urged that it were better policy to accept the offer, for neither horses nor men could bear the double journey without rest and food.

"I accede to your views," said Marcel, "but, alas, I fear the delay will be prejudicial to our mission."

And the young soldier passed forward into the palace grounds with a sad foreboding of pending trouble.

He and his friends had purposely stayed away from the wedding so as to leave the moment Harlez and Plenena had become man and wife.

A swift-running messenger had been posted in the church to report when the religious ceremony was about concluded. Thus they had lost the opportunity of testing the accuracy of the gate-keeper's statement as to the destination of the Princess. He appeared truthful and Marcel had to make himself as contented as possible.

But he could not dismiss the sadness that stole over him. He thought of the conversation in the grounds of the palace of Savelona, and of the manner and expressions of Harlez and the singer, and he saw again the dark features of the Archbishop, and feared to have his foreboding come true.

"Alas, Mona," mused Marcel, "if anything should happen to thy sister how can I present myself before thee and claim our plighted troth! And thou art very dear to me, my first and only love! May Heaven help and guide me?"

Thus prayed the infidel, Marcel, as he walked the grounds waiting the preparations of refreshments for himself and friends. And his eyes were cast upward and he looked for some reply, but no answer came, not even hope.

"Thus it is with us poor mortals, and we know not what dire evils may attend a short delay. We are like straws carried away with the stream, knowing not whither we are bound!"

And Marcel, thus musing, felt how uncertain are all earthly things and earthly plans, and he knew not how far Heaven directed all.

“And thus is life! We come, we move, we pass away and where are we! Who can say? Who will reveal to us the great mystery of life? Almighty Creator, let me know the purpose of my being!”

But no answer came to the humbled soul of the ardent young soldier. Nothing but gloom stole o'er the earth and his mind was in darkness.

How often then, in our sad hours of reflection, we write on the great tablet of memory our questioning thoughts.

And thus it was with Marcel, the intrepid soldier and bosom friend of the great Constantine. And as the gloom of the night was dispelled by the rising moon and twinkling stars, he further mused:

“Thou, lovely moon, and beauteous stars, are evidences of a Great Creator. And when the inhabitants of this little planet shall know their littleness and the magnitude of Thy creations, then they will have higher thoughts of Thee, Thou High and Holy One, who inhabiteth infinitude and art Thyself, infinity. They will cease to think of Thee as the punisher, and look up to Thee as the Merciful Creator, the great Lawgiver, whose works are from everlasting to everlasting the same.”

And as Marcel dwelt on Deity his mind opened out to the Infinite and the Eternal, and a peace that passeth understanding took possession of his soul. Yet duty called, and taking a hasty meal, he summoned his friends and pressed quickly forward to Savelona.

But he was doomed to disappointment. There were no tidings of the Princess. The Queen had not seen her, neither had Angelus nor Monica.

“What can have become of that lovely woman?” said

Monica. "I sent her no invitation to the wedding. I could not have done so, as it was decided upon hastily. She must have been deceived and lured away by the use of my name. Alas, sweet Serapta, am I doomed to work thee ill? I, who would have laid down my life to shield and protect thee from harm."

And Monica wept as one who would not be comforted. But, Marcel, more practical in his grief, hastened back to Sordello there to take up the quest; and after him went a little band of soldiers fully armed.

"Go," said the Archbishop, "and follow this hot-headed Roman and his Parsee companion. Watch their every movement. Methinks there is some treason on foot. Perhaps they are emissaries in the employ of the deposed Queen. If anything suspicious appears take them prisoners, or shoot them down, or, with sword and spear transfix them and spare them not, and I will uphold your conduct."

Thus commanded, Captain Athos sped on his way and watched the movements of Marcel's little band. He noticed that as the day dawned Marcel made close inquiry as to the Princess, but no tidings were gathered until they reached Sordello. There the first stray glimpse came of Serapta. A man laboring in the field, stated that he had seen a chariot drive quickly past containing two women and a soldier.

"And as I looked," he added, "I saw a beauteous face, something like an angel, and the driver was urging his horse to its quickest speed. Not a word was spoken, but it appeared like a race between life and death."

And from further inquiries Marcel gathered that it was

just before he reached the Royal gardens that this chariot sped on its way.

"And which road took they?" said Marcel anxiously.  
"We would follow them, and fear the angel-woman has come to harm."

Thus entreated, the man told all he knew, answering:

"I saw but little of these three, for they fled like the wind. Yet, as I watched the fleet steeds, I noticed they took the way to the tombs."

"And how far," said Marcel, "are the tombs from here? And are there any habitations there?"

"The tombs," replied the man, "are ten leagues from this, or thereabouts, and there are no habitations near except an outlying palace of the state, known as the 'Palace of the Tombs.'"

"And is this palace far beyond the tombs?" inquired the soldier, "and how shall we know it?"

"It is a large building on the top of a hill," said the man, "overlooking the last repository of the dead. It is used for any of the royal family who desire to indulge their grief by meditating amongst the tombs, and for state prisoners."

Marcel thanked the man, and departed, musing:

"And is it thus, Serapta, that I shall find thee? The living amongst the dead. Yet dead shall we all be at some time, and then of what value have our lives been?"

Thus mournfully mused the young soldier, delayed in his efforts to secure Serapta. And Captain Athos, following in the track, inquired of the man what he had told Marcel.

"I shall catch them in the toils," said Athos, "and we will give these young gallants time for reflection in

the Palace of the Tombs. No one comes here until life has lost all charms."

Thus spoke the willing tool of the Archbishop, and Marcel was in ignorance that there was any design on his liberty.

The young Roman would have smiled had he heard the boast, as he was imbued with the idea that all Romans were invincible.

In ignorance of pursuit, Marcel pressed forward until the men and horses were all weary. Then, finding a secluded spot, he called a halt for the night intending at day-break to resume his search.

Athos, seeing this, also halted, but in the dead of night he noiselessly aroused his men and passed quickly forward to the Palace of the Tombs.

Here he was received by Captain Pittrino, the Archbishop's tool in carrying off the Princess. Athos told him of Marcel and his party and they arranged the mode of procedure until they could communicate with their principal.

And these cunning and unprincipled men despatched a messenger to the Archbishop to inform him how matters stood and the means they intended to pursue to keep hold of Serapta, awaiting his further instructions.

When, therefore, on the following morning, Marcel reached the palace he was refused admission and all information was denied.

"And are you going to keep in prison the noble Princess Serapta?" inquired the young soldier. "By whose orders is she thus detained? Tell me and I will measure swords with him for this vile wrong done to my noble country-woman."

"We refuse to tell thee anything, thou boasting Roman," answered Pittrino from the palace gate-way. "Remember thou art at the mercy of this State, and it can be merciless to those who oppose its power."

"I care not for its power," answered Marcel. "If any harm come to her who is within those walls, the Kingdom of Savelona shall be swept from the earth."

"Proud and foolish boaster," exclaimed Athos, "thou mayest be a great man in thine own country, but here thou art as nothing, and our soldiers would sweep thee from their path as they would brush a fly that buzzed too loudly."

Marcel and the Duke conferred together and, feeling it would be useless to attempt to take the stronghold by storm, agreed to withdraw, and so as to throw those in the interior off their guard, the Duke said:

"We will away to the Queen and ascertain whether she will uphold this infamy on one of her sex, and your conduct shall be punished as it deserves."

And without awaiting any reply, the Duke, with Marcel and the men, wheeled 'round their horses and rode quickly away.

## CHAPTER XII.

## LOVE AND STRATAGEM OPEN THE PRISON GATES.

In the gloaming of the following day, when all work was over at the Palace of the Tombs, there came a knocking at the outer gate.

“What means that noise?” said Buetto, the old gate-keeper. “We are besieged by visitors, now we have got a woman in our care. Heigho, woman is the root of all evil.”

“You are wrong there,” said his companion, the sentinel on duty. “Money is the root of all evil. Woman is the spice of life and the world were a wilderness without her.”

“Tush, you are young and frolicsome,” replied Buetto. “When you get to my age you will know there is no devility but there’s a woman at the bottom of it.”

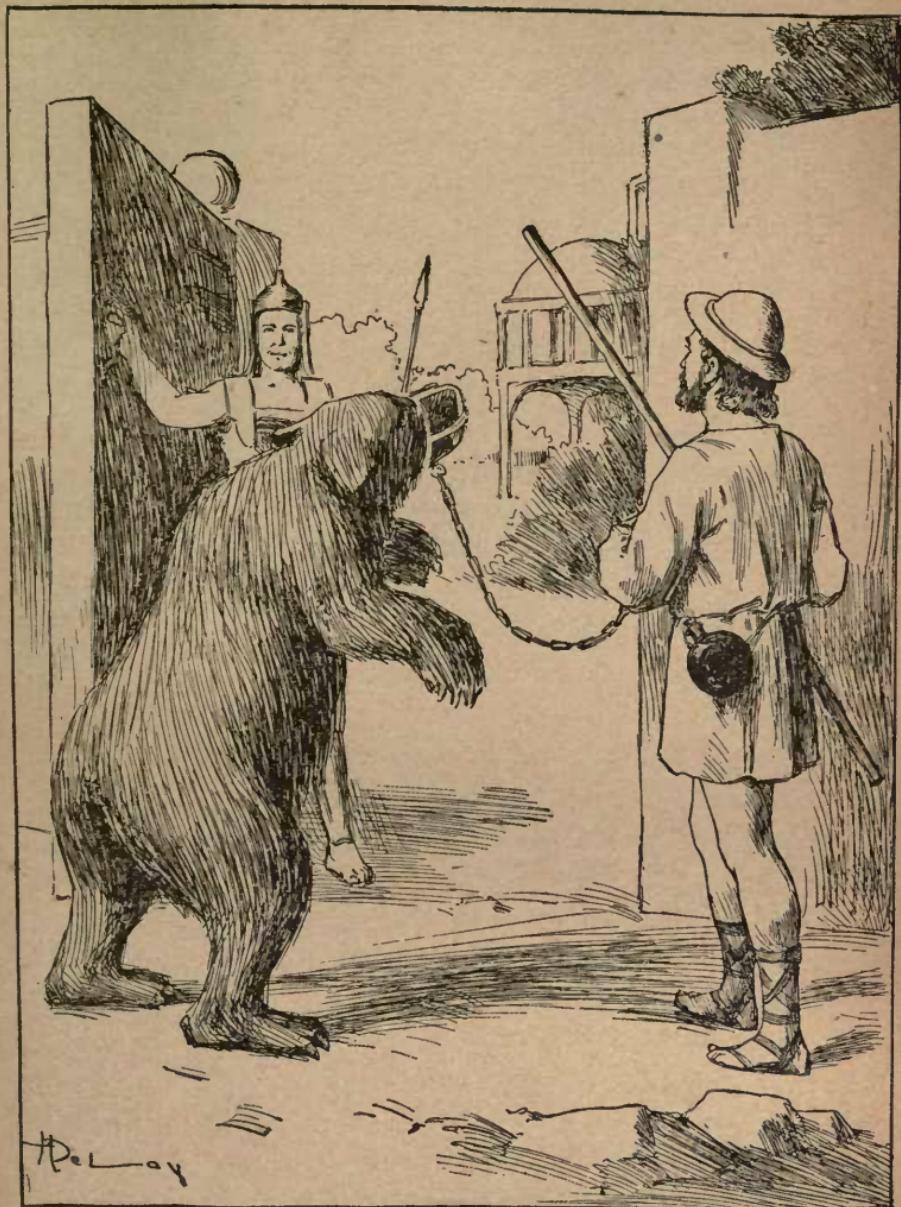
“Woman or no woman,” said the sentinel, “there’s a great row going on at the gate. Shall I open it for you, Buetto?”

“Aye do,” said Buetto, “I am too sleepy to answer the old gate to-night. It is time I was relieved of this drudgery. I am weary of the work. I will take a nap, for it is the hour when you take charge for the night.”

With that the old man hobbled away as though his life’s-span had nearly run out, and he was soon in a deep sleep.

When the sentinel got to the gate he found there a tall, rough-looking man leading a bear in a chain. The animal was playing antic tricks and frisking wildly to the full length that he could go in his chain.

“Be still, Bruno,” said the man. “Dost thou not see



THE SENTINEL FOUND THERE A TALL, ROUGH-LOOKING MAN LEADING A BEAR IN A CHAIN. See p 180.



that thou art approaching a royal palace where thy hungry stomach shall be filled, and thou mayest sleep long and soundly?"

The huge beast appeared to understand what was said, and licked his jaws as though he already tasted the good food promised.

"Good sentinel," said the man, speaking in a rough, country dialect and patting the huge head of the bear, "canst thou give me and my companion a den where we can lay down and rest for the night? And, then, if thou wilt, the bear shalt dance to thee and perform his tricks to please the palace maids. Any hole will do, for the bear and I never part company, so be not over particular."

Thus addressed, the sentinel, who enjoyed a good bear dance, and wishing to have something to relieve the dull monotony of the tombs, assented and admitted the man and bear within the gate.

"Thou must keep the bear quiet," said the sentinel, "and go straight to thy hole which one of the palace attendants will show thee. Then to-morrow, good fellow, thou must give us some sport, for the maids love the fun although they pretend to be so alarmed."

And, laughing loudly at his own wit, he called from his post:

"Aleppo, here, come and find a place for these two bears." And the worthy sentinel felt already there was some fun in the adventure, and his classing both as equal brutes tickled his fancy amazingly, and he laughed long and boisterously.

The leader of the bear appeared also to enjoy the joke and laughed to keep him company.

"Thanks, good sentinel," said the man, "the bears

shall give you jolly fun to-morrow. I will tell the larger bear not to snore too loud, for he can snore, I can tell you."

"Aye, man," said the sentinel, "it were well that both of you should keep as quiet as possible to-night for we have visitors and may have more before the day dawns. Now, Aleppo, find the roughest bear some bones to pick. Give him a snappy old maid if thou likest and he may munch her up, bones and all. As to the other bear, let him amuse the bonny wenches in the servants' kitchen, but keep an eye on him, Aleppo, keep an eye on him, lest they fall in love with the brute and he steals them away with the fascination of his mild blue eye."

And the funny sentinel felt that he was having rare fun, and Aleppo sedately made a salute and beckoned the "bears" away. Both followed the servant, and the bear-trainer saw the huge beast littered down with straw for the night, while Aleppo brought some meat and bread, and then speaking to the keeper, said:

"Before you go to your companion for the night come with me to the servants' hall and have a snack at our game pastry and a pull at our home made wines. Have you secured the brute? He must not get loose, for we have one of the court ladies here, and they are not accustomed to these bears in their natural state; they see them there only in disguise, but they are bears none the less."

"Right you are, Aleppo, there are no worse bears than those who walk on two legs and wear their paws under velvet and fine linen. The ordinary brute is nothing to such as these!"

"I fancy I know one such bear," said Aleppo, "and he

may be here to-night or early on the morrow to tear and rend one of earth's sweet lambs."

The servant spoke in riddles to an ordinary bear-tamer, but the one who listened was not of the ordinary sort.

"And where is the lamb, Aleppo? It were a pity if the bear should devour it?"

The servant felt he had probably said too much. He therefore, turned the conversation by saying:

"We must press on or your supper will be cold. We can talk while you eat, for this is a dull hole and we like to hear of the going on of the outside world. Fine doings at Savelona! The old religion turned out and a new one ushered in with flourishes of priestly trumpets as usual. These fellows are always right! They only have the key to the mysteries! But, blow me, it is wonderful what different tunes the old trumpet plays! First, this is truth, and then, no, it is something else. And ere long it is a new thing altogether. But the knowing ones can see that it is all playing on one note, and merely 'ringing changes' for the unthinking multitude."

"Why, Aleppo, truly you are a philosopher! Let me have some supper and good 'tomb' wine and we will be merry as the new church bells, for I have just come from Savelona with my bear where we performed before the new Queen, and had jolly times."

"Ah, then, master bear-tamer, you can tell me all the news as you taste our old wine. I will bring you some that was laid down when Senginus, the V., was king. Ah, that is rare good stuff, I can tell you! It is equal to that our ancestors could make so well. Old Nimrod and other ancient swells, do you know?"

And, Aleppo, laying the game pie before his guest,

took a huge flagon to draw the wine, and quickly returning, said:

“ This is a special favorite with our late High Priest, now called Archbishop, and he is a good judge of the true juice of the grape, I can tell you.”

“ Yes, I doubt not,” said the bear-tamer, “ I drink to his reverence, and may he live to be a better man now he has turned Christian Priest.”

“ I cordially respond to that toast,” replied Aleppo, “ and there is plenty of room for amendment. None are perfect, not even priests. But tell me, who is this Angelus that has come into the kingdom, and made such a talk, and is now married and done for?”

“ I will tell you the story as I heard it at the palace if you care to hear it,” replied the bear-tamer, “ but I will not vouch for its truth.”

“ We will take it for what it’s worth,” replied Aleppo, “ but, ere you begin your story finish that game pie, and take another good pull at the wine; there is plenty more where that came from, so drink away, and be happy and merry.”

The bear-tamer took up the flagon, and appeared to take a long drink, but really consumed very little. He was, however, very pressing for Aleppo to take his share, and this the servant did with considerable enjoyment, and emptying the vessel went to draw more.

The visitor narrated all the particulars he had gathered about the missionary, Angelus, and how Spenata had laid him on the altar, and was about to light it with a torch, adding:

“ Then the three holy ones came down direct from heaven amid lightning and thunder, and extinguished the

torch, and threw the High Priest from the Hill of Sacrifice. This done the angels released Angelus and sent a message that human sacrifices were forever to cease in this land."

"And how then shall we be saved from eternal punishment?" inquired Aleppo. "If there are to be no human sacrifices the gods will be angry and punish all of us."

"Be not alarmed," said the bear-tamer, "it was all a mistake from the beginning, for the Creator never required that blood should be shed to appease His anger."

"But we have always been taught that such was necessary," returned the attendant, "and if once required, surely it would be so forever?"

"No, that does not follow, Aleppo, especially if the idea was only the imagination of mankind and not a revelation from Heaven. You know the wise men, over a thousand years ago, said 'Deity made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.' It is these inventions of mankind that have given all the trouble. Man has forged religious fetters and voluntarily bound himself with them to his own hurt. The Deity only requires man to be upright in his conduct, and do the right and just and true."

"Then what is this Christian idea?" inquired the palace attendant. "Is it the truth, and something quite new? I hear God came down from Heaven to reveal it, and if so it must be truth, for the Almighty cannot err."

"Christianity, Aleppo, is only another ringing of the changes. A fresh working up of the mystery of Horus, the child-god of the Egyptians, representing Osiris, who descended from high heaven, became incarnate in the

flesh, opposed the spirit of evil, otherwise the devil, worked miracles, laid down his life for mankind, was buried, rose again, and, ascending back to heaven, became the 'Opener of good' and 'Judge of the living and the dead.'"

"I thought," said Aleppo, "that Christianity was something quite new and that God Himself had, at last, visited the creatures He had made and revealed the object and purposes of life."

"Nay, Aleppo, this is not so, for those who have studied the Christian history know well that all the materials for making up the theory existed long before. The Parsees, in their divine Zoroaster, who came from heaven, had temptations, miracles, interviews with Deity, and purity of thought, and nobility of life and character. Mithra, too, was the 'Light of the World,' and gave to all who believed the doctrine, eternal life and heaven, and the followers of this god were taught to look upon themselves as plants of heaven, not of earth. So Guitama, the Brahma of the Hindoos, was god incarnate in the flesh, and had temptations, miracles, and interviews with the Almighty God. So, I might enumerate, and you would find, Aleppo, that there was nothing new, and that hell itself was as old as the pyramids and Cleopatra's Needle."

"Ah, well," said the palace attendant, "I shall know how to answer the inquires I have had about this new faith. I thought it strange that any revelation from Heaven should keep hell alive. It has always appeared to me absurd that a God, stated to be so good and just, should have kindled hell to burn up His handiwork whom

he had left without accurate knowledge. But tell me something more lively of the doings of the court."

And the bear-tamer, finding a ready listener, recounted all the news he thought interesting, and plied Aleppo with the flagon until the palace attendant got communicative. Then, by dint of close inquiries, learnt where the Princess Serapta was located for the night, along with her maid.

This proved to be near where the bear was placed, and, having pressed Aleppo to take a finishing drink, the keeper bade him good-night, and the attendant was soon stretched all his length across the hearth, fast asleep.

But the keeper returned quietly to the kitchen, and finding Aleppo taking advantage of the warmth coming from the fire and snoring loudly, he took from the girdle of the attendant a bunch of keys and a short dagger.

When the keeper had satisfied himself that he was not pursued, nor likely to be, he returned to the bear's den, and speaking low, said to the bear:

"Come along, Alonso. Follow stealthily in your disguise. I have ascertained the bed-chamber of the Princess, who is watched over only by her maid. You secure the attendant and I will carry away the Princess. See, here are the keys, and the maid must help us in the flight. You, no doubt, can make her do anything when you get her in those powerful claws of yours. Work well your part, Alonso, and all will go as we desire."

"Aye, master, aye, proceed and I follow." And the bear walked after his keeper as nimbly as possible.

The bear-tamer tried several keys, and at last the door of communication was opened, and they found themselves in a bed-chamber where Coppia, the maid-servant,

reclined fast asleep. He left the bear to watch over the maid, and passed on to another room where he saw a glimmering light. This, he rightly conjectured, was the chamber occupied by the Princess. He saw the door was partially open, and so as not hastily to alarm her, said in a low voice:

“Princess Serapta, be not alarmed. I am Marcel, from Constantinople, the betrothed of your sister Mona, and I have come to this land in search of you and the Prince Benoni.”

At these words, which were spoken in clear Roman tones, the Princess recognized the voice of the soldier who had applied for admission to the Palace of the Tombs, and felt no fear.

She had not retired for the night, but was in the same attire as during the day, and coming out of her chamber, replied:

“Noble Marcel, the name of my sister Mona is like sweet music to my ears. Any one bringing it to me from across the sea is ever welcome. I will not ask how you contrived to get access into this prison, but tell me what would you have me do ?”

Thus appealed to, the young soldier realized that he had to do with a practical mind, and as quickly answered:

“I desire you to prepare to fly at once from this sombre abode. I have, in the adjoining chamber, my faithful servant Alonso, disguised as a bear, and watching over your attendant, who is fast asleep. Shall we leave her so, or take her with us ?”

“She is, I think, inclined to aid me, and if you will conceal yourself, with the bear, in this closet, I will

arouse her and bring her to my room, and then be guided by her replies."

Marcel left at once and beckoning to Alonso both went into the closet while the Princess proceeded to arouse Coppia.

"Come with me," said Serapta, "I would converse with you awhile."

The girl followed, somewhat surprised to see the Princess fully dressed as on the day before.

"I have awoke you, Coppia, because I am offered deliverance from this prison, and as I believe you would aid me, I have deemed it well to ask you to accompany me.

"Will you do so, Coppia, and if we escape we proceed to Constantinople, and you shall go with us?"

The girl had often spoken of her desire to see foreign parts, and the Roman Empire was looked upon as the most powerful, and as containing all that was wonderful and she expressed her readiness to go with the Princess.

"I thank thee, Coppia, and now get on some travelling attire and I will do the same. Be not surprised if one comes into thy room disguised as a bear. He is a trusted servant of the noble Roman whose voice thou didst hear yesterday demanding admission to this prison. What they could not achieve by force they have accomplished by stratagem. Now, hasten thou, and be ready as we pass through. Thou knowest the outlets and must lead the way with the bear for thy companion. Be not afraid, for these Romans are honorable and valiant men."

The Princess was soon ready to depart, and going to the closet spoke to Marcel, and the three passed forward to Coppia's room.

"Lead on, Coppia," said the Princess, "and Heaven

help and protect us while we escape from this hateful place."

Marcel unlocked the door and the four went into the passage when the soldier took the precaution to lock it again.

"Come this way," said Coppia, "and give me the bunch of keys. I know a subterranean way which will lead us into the open country and thence to the coast."

Marcel handed her the keys and she and Alonso pressed quickly forward to the end of the passage, when Coppia, selecting a small key, opened a door disclosing a narrow way where they were compelled to walk in single file.

Then they came to two wider paths branching right and left. Coppia did not take either, but stooping down touched a knob and a small door flew open showing some steps leading into a dark vault. This they entered and then Coppia, taking from under her mantle a small lamp, proceeded to light it, saying:

"We are now away from the Palace of the Tombs and our light must not be seen from without, but it will be necessary to proceed as quickly as possible, for if overtaken we should all suffer death. This subterranean retreat is believed only to be known to Spenata and the trusted Athos. I, however, became acquainted with the secret sometime ago and little imagined I should use it for this purpose. But let us away, to tarry here means sudden and violent death."

The Princess came near Coppia and with deep feeling said:

"How can I thank you, Coppia, for taking this great risk for me?"

The words sounded sweet to the ears of the palace attendant, and taking the hand of Serapta, she pressed it warmly as she replied:

"It is nothing, fair Princess. I would risk more for you than this. What is life for if not to help each other?"

And, retaining Serapta's hand, she led the way. Sometimes they proceeded on the level, and then came more steps cut in the earth leading to another vaulted chamber. Here were openings to let in the air, and a fire-place as though at some time it had been used for a living-room. They could hear the falling of water, and Coppia led them to a fountain, with a cup floating in it fastened by a chain, and offered each a drink.

Thus refreshed the party proceeded further and soon felt the fresh morning air, laden with breezes from the sea. But on going further they found the air came from small openings in the roof, and they were met by another door. This, Coppia opened and then a huge stone blocked the way which required all the strength of the two men to remove.

When this was accomplished Coppia informed them that they were in the open country. Marcel and Alonso proceeded to remove their disguises, and each came forth attired in the ordinary dress of the country, but Marcel still retained his position as master, while Alonso appeared as a native servant. Then, locking the door and rolling back the stone, the party proceeded quickly forward in the direction of the coast, hoping there to find some vessel outward bound.

In this, however, they were disappointed. Nothing was to be seen but a small rowing boat. The friends

halted, and seating themselves on the bank, conversed as to the best course to pursue.

"I know," said Coppia, "a safe retreat. A little to north-east is an island sacred to the ancient gods of this kingdom. It is known as Lemnia, and it was here that the young students in divinity used to come to complete their initiation for the priesthood. The exact nature is not now known and, since Spenata manufactured the kingdom of heaven, the island has been over-looked and is nearly forgotten. But my uncle, Planos, is the keeper of the mysteries and would gladly give us shelter from the Archbishop, for he hates the old Priest for despising the ancient faith. Besides, it is a kind of sanctuary, and all who are received within the sacred limits are treated as under Heaven's protection."

Marcel listened closely to the description given by Coppia, and knowing the power of religion on the public mind, felt that the island was more likely to afford temporary shelter than the open country. But being desirous of ascertaining something as to the history of the palace attendant he replied:

"Is anyone acquainted with your relationship to Planos? For if so, this would be the first place Athos would direct his attention."

"No one knows that Planos is my relative," replied Coppia, "and I have always spoken in terms of depreciation when the island has been referred to. Lemnia is the most unlikely place for any inquiry or search to be made. In addition to that, the old temple of the gods is on a high hill and commands an extensive view and no one can approach without our having timely warning, and

there are hiding places that would defy the closest search."

There was the genuine ring of truth in the tones of Coppia, and Marcel was prepared to trust her.

"I think, Princess," he said, "that we cannot do better than row across to Lemnia. We will take this boat, and Alonso shall bring it back again and proceed to Savelona and see the Duke de Bismantua and if possible prevail on the Queen to send a ship to take us to Constantinople."

Nothing better offering to the minds of the company, the two men assisted the women into the boat and rowed swiftly towards the sacred sanctuary.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEMPLE OF THE GODS A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR  
SERAPTA.

While these things were proceeding the Duke de Bismantua was hastening to Savelona to place the matter before the Queen and beseech her to save the honor of the Princess Serapta and release her from the Palace of the Tombs.

"I come," said the Duke, who obtained a private audience of the Queen, "to beg your Majesty to release the Princess Serapta from the prison to which she has been sent. Marcel and I demanded admission to confer with my relative, but the pompous Athos and his colleague, Pittrino, angrily refused our seeing the Princess, and we fear greatly for her safety."

The Queen was much troubled by this communication. The Palace of the Tombs was held in great fear and many dark scenes were narrated respecting it.

"And did you learn," inquired the Queen, anxious to gain time for thought, "how the Princess came to be conveyed to that dreadful place?"

"We have gathered no further tidings beyond those we recounted to your Majesty when we came so anxiously from Sordello hoping to find the Princess at Monica's wedding."

"Alas, how deeply moved is Monica! She seems to feel as though she had been a party to the deceit. And what has become of your noble friend Marcel?" inquired the Queen, still anxious to postpone any decision as to the steps to be taken for rescuing the Princess.



THE VENERABLE KEEPER OF THE MYSTERIES CAME WITH THE GATE-KEEPER TO  
WELCOME HIS NIECE AND FRIENDS. See p. 202.



The Duke saw the indecision of the Queen, and replied:

"Marcel, like a true hero, has stayed behind, to attempt by stratagem what could not be accomplished by force. He promised his betrothed, the sister of the Princess, to bring back to her the idol of her heart, and feels he must attempt everything in honor to accomplish it."

Costanza looked with admiration upon the excited countenance of the young Parsee, which glowed with enthusiasm for his friend, and softly replied:

"Would that there were more of such noble men as Marcel. In that case we should have no such hateful places in our land as the Palace of the Tombs, where scenes of bloodshed and wrong take place, and where women are entombed by men. I will reflect upon the best course to pursue. It requires much thought, for I fear the Archbishop has a hand in the abduction. But yet, he may believe the Prince Benoni to be false, and if so his conduct may not be so bad as at first sight would appear."

Thus the Queen reasoned aloud, trusting to find an excuse for her father's conduct and a guide to her own course of action.

The Duke, noticing how troubled the Queen was, sought for awhile to turn the conversation.

"If we can liberate the Princess Serapta, noble Queen, then I fly to Constantinople to bring home your sister and claim my sweet reward."

And as the young man spoke he took the Queen's hand and raised it to his lips, and she came nearer to him, and

young love beamed from their eyes, and he took her in his arms and kissed her fondly.

“ My love,” said he, “ how the days have lagged slowly since I parted from you. And now I cannot long be with you for affairs of State will claim you from me. How I wish I could take the wings of a bird and fly to Constantinople, accomplish my errand and return. Then, Costanza, you will be mine.”

And the Queen listened to these words which sounded like sweet music in her ears, and softly replied:

“ I am yours, now, Bismantua. Wherever you are, there goes my fondest hopes, my dearest love, my life, my happiness! Love is not a thing for a day, but for eternity. I, too, have missed you every hour, and shall do so until you return, your mission accomplished.”

“ Let me have your daily thoughts and prayers, dear Costanza, for Heaven must answer such petitions as you will present.”

“ Ah, Bismantua, how sweet are the thoughts of Heaven’s providence watching over and guiding all our concerns, but, when clouds come over life’s sky, as in the case of Serapta and Benoni and my sister, how hard it is to realize that Heaven has guided these events. And yet the Creator must care for His creatures and wish them happiness.”

“ This is a great subject, my love, and we can only trust and hope that all is for the best. I will now say farewell, and call upon you tomorrow or the following day, by which time I hope we may hear news of Marcel and his faithful attendant Alonso, and the Princess. Until then, my love, farewell.”

And the young man, again kissing the sweet lips of her

he loved so well, retired to his room, knowing that the Queen's time was much taken up by State affairs.

While this was taking place at the Palace of Savelona, the friends Marcel, Serapta, and Coppia had landed on the island of Lemnia, and Alonso quickly rowed back to the mainland, and fastening the boat as before, made haste to Savelona as arranged.

The three friends left on the island, stood on the hill and watched the faithful fellow until he had secured his boat and disappeared in the distance.

"There goes one of earth's true nobility," said Marcel. "He has saved my life many times and is as true as the finest tempered steel. He possesses no earthly badge of dignities, but he is one of Heaven's favorites. I trust no harm will come to him in this bold venture."

Coppia looked with admiration upon Marcel, for she knew that Alonso was only a servant.

"And is it thus," she mused, "that these high Roman nobles view their attendants? Truly, I shall like to belong to this great Empire that possesses such true brotherhood and produces such nobles."

The Princess Serapta also expressed aloud her appreciation of Alonso. Then, turning around, the party ascended the remaining heights.

The sun had just risen and cast rays of glory across the waves, which sparkled as they rose and fell, and the birds flitted from tree to tree and caroled forth their morning song.

"What a sweet paradise is this," said Serapta.

"It brings back joyous memories of the Sacred Island and the sunny mornings when all nature appeared to re-

joice. Alas, how sad to think that these fairest spots of earth are dedicated to idolatry."

And as she spake she drew attention to the temple at the summit of the hill pointing its spire to heaven.

"There," she continued, "is another relic of the ignorance of our ancestors. See yon image of the three great gods?"

"Yes," said Marcel, "these are the early ideas of the great Trinity in the Godhead. Ever since the days of ancient Egypt mankind has always had a triad of gods, and it appears Savelona is no exception, neither is Rome. The Christians have just added to the Almighty, the Son and Holy Spirit!"

"But," said Serapta. "that is a very different thing. Christianity is true but the other faiths are false."

"Christianity is true, noble Prince, because it is the religion of to-day, but there will come a time when it, too, shall be called idolatry, and the Almighty only worshipped and adored."

"But," said Serapta, "the Almighty is worshipped now by Christians, and they join with such worship the Son and Holy Spirit."

"It is the joining of the Three to make one God, in which idolatry comes in," replied Marcel. "Constantine and the bishops knew that they must keep alive the old traditions. For upward of two thousand years there had been triads of gods amongst the nations, therefore, at the Council of Nice, the Christian Trinity was formed, and men were commanded to fall down and worship the image which Constantine the Great had set up."

"You are quoting the words which the Babylonish

king used a thousand years ago," said the Princess, "but they are not adapted to the case."

"The cases are in some respects similar," replied Marcel. "The Babylonish king desired to be the leader of the religion of the State and, therefore, made a god to his own fancy and required the people to worship it under pain of death by burning. Constantine has made a god according to his fancy, and passed laws requiring his people to worship this god which he has set up, or be banished from his Empire, and, by and by, when this faith has become cemented by usage and custom, burning will be resorted to."

"Surely, Marcel," sorrowfully replied the Princess, "you cannot imagine that a religion of love and self-sacrifice can ever be developed into the same wicked absurdity as the religion of Bablyon?"

"This will come to pass, Serapta, and Christians will burn Christians on minor points of belief. Already there are many bishops banished from the Empire because they do not endorse all the points decided by the Council of Nice. This is sad that men should presume to punish for doctrines incapable of proof. This will ever be so until mankind is raised above it by the spread of knowledge. But, Serapta, there will come a time when the progress of science will establish that there is no place for hell as now imagined to exist; and if hell be banished then there need be no saviour to save from an imaginary hell. Take away hell, and the necessity for a saviour ceases to exist."

"But," replied the Princess, "I have always been taught that the Saviour distinctly asserted that there is a hell, and so dreadful that the pain cannot be lessened,

But must continue forever. It is fearful, yet I believe it true, for my parents so taught me."

"There, fair Princess, you admit the weakness of this faith. You receive the belief because your parents told you so. Possibly you have never meditated upon the matter reasonably, nor made research into the history of the growth of these ideas. And when centuries of common usage shall have accustomed mankind to receive these doctrines unquestioned, men's minds will be blinded by false logic and the burden of proof will be thrown upon those refusing to believe. Yet, centuries rolled on centuries will never make that true which is now false, nor throw the burden of proof on those refusing to believe."

"I am sorry, Marcel, to hear you speak against the Christian faith. Did my parents consent to your betrothal to my sister with full knowledge of your views?"

"I had no opportunity, Serapta, to explain, but the Empress-Mother called me infidel, and will use all her power to prevent our marriage."

"You being a Roman, Marcel, and Christianity being now the staple religion it appears that my parents may agree with Aunt Helena."

"Then why," said Marcel, "should they consent to your union with Benoni? He is a Zoroastrian, and I believe in the same God that he does. Are not the cases alike, fair Princess?"

"They are not the same," replied Serapta. "The religion of the Parsees is Zoroastrianism, not Christianity. Therefore, he is of the religion of the country. The religion of the Romans is Christianity. Therefore, Marcel, if you are not a Christian you are not of the faith of

your country, but are an infidel. Alas, I fear you and dear Mona will have much trouble ere your betrothal is consummated by marriage."

"Pardon me, Serapta, if I say your reasoning is false. And yet," sadly added Marcel, "this is the way the nations argue and act. Believe the current faith or suffer as infidels, says public opinion. If this were true logic then each State religion would be right for the citizens of each nation, yet wrong if embraced by outsiders. Alas, I fear this will be the prevailing idea until fuller knowledge ousts the absurdity."

"These close reasonings tire my head," said Serapta. "Oh, would that we could have clearer proof, and that all nations could hold one faith, then surely persecution would cease!"

"When the truth is discovered or revealed," said Marcel, "all nations will be of one mind and truth cannot vary."

Thus ended the first discussion between these noble ones and each was of the same opinion still. Thus it often is. We talk and argue and point out differences and distinctions and part without any results except a feeling of uncertainty.

While the friends conversed they had been walking to the temple of the gods on the summit of the hill, and reaching this point Coppia knocked loudly for admission.

There came to the look-out over the huge gateway an old man with long white flowing hair and stooping figure, and in a voice enfeebled by years, he inquired who sought admission to the ancient university.

"We would see the venerable Planos, keeper of the mysteries," answered the attendant from the Palace of

the Tombs. "Inform him that his niece, Coppia, seeks admission, with the Princess Serapta and the noble Marcel, from Rome and Constantinople."

"Come in," said the old man, "and rest in the waiting room while I proceed to announce you to my venerable master."

The venerable keeper of the mysteries came with the gate-keeper to welcome his niece and friends. He was a handsome looking old man with a pleasant voice and manner, and without any appearance of mystery about him.

"Welcome Coppia," said Planos, "to this ancient university, along with your friends. It is not usual for us to receive women, but in your case we will make an exception. You will, however, have to promise not to turn the heads of the students from their books. They are here to study as great mysteries as those possessed by the fair sex, and much less interesting."

And the keeper of the mysteries smiled at his own drolery, and Marcel and the Princess Serapta were separately welcomed as visitors from a foreign court.

"By and by," said Planos, "I shall want to hear full particulars of the new faith which your great Emperor has introduced into the Roman Empire, and which Spennata has deemed it right to make the State religion of Savelona. But now you must be weary. I will show you to your rooms and we will shortly have refreshments prepared."

While the three are thus being so well received and entertained, we will return to the Palace of Savelona.

There was a great commotion occasioned by the visit

of His Majesty, the King of Sepania, a neighboring kingdom of equal importance and adjoining to Savelona.

It had long been the desire of Spenata to unite these two countries, and he had invited the King, Pinto, on a visit during Ivena's reign. But Ivena had not taken the royal fancy. He inclined to the younger sister, Costanza, and was prepared to marry her if Spenata divided Savelona or given certain portions of the Kingdom along with his daughter.

This, however, the Arch-priest was not prepared to do, and therefore the negotiations fell through. But now that Costanza was sole Queen her father lost no time in returning to the subject, and sent a special messenger with an invitation to the King.

He had hoped that Pinto would have been present to witness the Christian marriage ceremony, but State affairs in Sepania prevented his Majesty's attendance.

Religion was not a matter about which the king troubled himself at all. He left that for the priests, and considered it their legitimate hunting-field.

"What does it matter," said Pinto, "whether I believe this or that, it all comes to the same thing, and I don't see that men are now translated to Heaven without dying on account of their faith. There were only two of the races who are stated to have received this distinction, and they were not Africans, so far as I can learn. Let us, therefore, enjoy the gift of life and leave the creeds for the priests. That is their business, and they are well paid in all nations, and always will be."

Spenata had no objection to such a king for a son-in-law. The truth of any religion never troubled the Arch-bishop. Will it be popular and pay well was all that

Spenata thought on the subject. His chief idea was that an union of the two kingdoms would make the joint army invincible in war, and would so awe the surrounding tribes that there would be universal peace throughout the combined kingdoms.

The people of both States were not averse to such an union, and Sepania was especially in favor of it as Pinto would be sovereign of both countries, and it was believed that the union would extend commerce and strengthen the power of both Savelona and Sepania.

Spenata had not taken the Queen into his confidence, deeming her too young and inexperienced to have any voice in such a great venture, and left it for future explanation when matters became ripe for action.

Her father did, however, inform Costanza that he had invited King Pinto on a visit, and hoped she would receive him with full honors, stating that it was very desirable to keep on friendly terms with such a powerful neighbor.

The Queen expressed her willingness to do her best, and added:

“I would that my sister had been here for she was more capable than I am to receive such a visitor. Besides, father, I always thought you desired Ivena to consider an alliance with King Pinto.”

“I desire such alliance no longer,” replied Spenata, somewhat angrily, “and I think it will be well to omit mention of your sister’s name in our interviews. She has ran away with a married man, and it is not becoming of you to countenance her in such proceedings.”

“I believe,” replied the Queen, “that there is nothing wrong between Prince Benoni and my sister. Your

threats against both left them no other course than to flee to a land where they could be in safety."

"Enough," angrily answered Spenata, "they have gone off together and that is sufficient to prevent Ivena ever showing herself here again as Queen. Remember, Costanza, I desire particularly that you shall make yourself agreeable to King Pinto. Important State affairs requires that his Majesty should be conciliated. I shall fully rely upon you."

The wily Queen-maker and the Archbishop turned on his heel and left the royal presence, and poor Costanza felt there was a dark cloud appearing in the horizon of her fond hopes. It was not fully shaped as yet, but the manner of expression, as much as the words, alarmed the Queen, and a shade of sorrow rested on her previously happy face.

When, therefore, King Pinto was introduced, he found the Queen courteous, but a sadness rested upon her, and he missed the archness and freedom that had attracted him so greatly on his previous visit.

When the interview was over and he and Spenata were alone the King referred to Costanza and her reception of him.

"I see a great change in your daughter, Spenata. She has lost that sweet girlish air which attracted and drew me to her when I was last in this Kingdom. What causes this change?"

"I think," replied the Archbishop, "that the cares of State are troubling my daughter. If she had a husband to relieve her of responsibility her lightness of heart and manner would return. I fancy, too, my hasty mention of your visit has raised the desire to receive you with due

honor, and possibly she is not yet fully accustomed to her queenly position, and you must admit that her anxiety to receive you properly would necessarily weigh with her and make her staid and sedate. In a few days, however, I doubt not you will see her brightness and archness return, and she will appear to you as in times gone by."

"I trust it will be so, Spenata, for she is more lovely than ever, and if she is prepared to respond to my attachment I should dearly like her to become my Queen. I will not hurry her decision, but woo her gently, and trust all will be well."

Spenata was greatly pleased at the result of his plans and relied that all would go according to his expectations. He was not a man accustomed to fail in achieving anything on which he had set his mind, and he had fully determined that the two kingdoms should be united, and that this should be accomplished by a marriage between King Pinto and his daughter, Queen Costanza.

But he made his calculations without any knowledge of the episode in the garden when young love took possession and carried the Queen into the embraces of the Duke de Bismantua.

"It is well that Costanza has no entanglements, and that she is of a yielding disposition. With Ivena I might have had some difficulty unless she had a liking for the King, but with Costanza I shall only have to express my wishes firmly, and she will at once obey."

Thus mused Spenata and vainly thought he could bind hearts and wills as he had moulded the people of Savenlona. He had been a successful man and his scheming had turned out profitably for himself. The inhabitants

of Savelona had not great cause to regret his rule, for, although he taxed them for his own expenditure, his strong influence, aided by their chiefs, had maintained peace in the borders, and Savelona had become prosperous and strong.

King Pinto noticed all this, and that the merchants were all wealthy, and all around were signs of prosperity.

He had brought a goodly staff of his own soldiers and body-guard and these fraternized with the soldiers of Savelona. He was also well received by the three Chiefs, Durana, Gushta, and Volva. They really preferred a king to reign rather than a woman, and especially thought it might be well if Spenata's power was somewhat curtailed.

The days sped quickly onward and King Pinto was entertained right royally. The chiefs arranged tournaments where the soldiers tried their skill in mimic warfare, and there were games and sports, and occasionally buffoonery.

But the King enjoyed the time when he could walk with the Queen alone in the palace grounds, or when they went hawking or fishing, or made a party to see some of the celebrated sights of Savelona.

"You have a lovely Kingdom," said Pinto, "and your people are devoted to your reign. Yet, Costanza, you lack one thing to complete your happiness."

"What is that, your Majesty?" inquired the Queen.

"You require, Costanza, a kindred soul. One in every way your equal. One who can aid and assist you in the government of your kingdom."

"I have some worthy chiefs," replied the Queen, "and I can have the advice of my father whenever I require it."

"But, Costanza, you cannot expect to have your father always. There will come a time, in due course of nature, when he will sleep with his fathers. You want a younger man, and a closer tie to make your happiness complete."

And the King looked with admiration upon the fair face of Costanza, over which a rosy hue began to shine, and he took courage and continued:

"My visit, noble Queen, has been one of unbounded pleasure. These rambles, with you as my companion, will live in my memory and ever seem fresh and sweet; would that they could continue always. May I hope, Costanza, that my future will not be indifferent to you?"

"You will ever be my friend, King Pinto," softly answered the Queen, not grasping the purport of the conversation, "and when you have returned to your kingdom I shall hope to hear as to your welfare. I am pleased that your visit has been pleasurable, and hope you will renew it on the earliest opportunity. My father and our generals will always welcome you amongst us when you come in peace as now, and I trust you will never come otherwise."

The King listened for some warmer note than mere friendship. He had given his heart to the young Queen and her reply sounded cold and chill.

"I would, noble Queen, possess some warmer attachment than mere friendship. I have given you all my heart. May I hope, Costanza, that you will look favorably upon the gift, and give me yourself in return?"

The Queen blushed deeply and remained silent. Pinto took encouragement and proceeded:

"As we have walked alone, and looked upon the

beauty of creation, and conversed, my heart has felt a peace such as I have never before experienced. I realized how sweet all things would be if I had a companion who would always thus beguile the time. Your gentle spirit, Costanza, has taken possession of my soul, and all seems beautiful around me."

And still the Queen answered not, but color on her cheeks deepened. She was perplexed and troubled.

The King would have proceeded and made matters clearer, but as they turned around the trees by which their path led, the Duke de Bismantua stood before them.

The Queen, like a frightened fawn, rushed forward to the side of the Duke as though there would be safety.

King Pinto frowned, and for the first time a feeling of jealousy took possession of his mind. He had not seen anyone favored by the Queen, and even now, reasoned the King, it may only be maiden bashfulness.

Yet he felt uncomfortable. He had received no express encouragement, and this encounter with the Duke had destroyed the hopes the King had built on the Queen's heightened color.

The conversation became general, for both the men had been too well trained in the usage of the world to allow themselves to appear openly antagonistic. This, however, did not prevent each wishing the other away. The Duke had sought a private interview with the Queen because Alonso had reached the palace and related his adventures and the rescue of the Princess Serapta.

All parties, therefore, felt it a relief when the palace was reached, and the Queen bade the men adieu, and retired into her own apartments.

"Alas," mused Costanza, "what complications are

these! My heart feels sad when I realize that I cannot respond as King Pinto desires. My father will be very angry if he learns that the King has become attached to me and that I have given my heart to Bismantua. But, noble Duke, thou art worthy to be my consort, or my King. How I love thee, and never more than now when there appear difficulties in the way."

And the Queen looked lovely, with her heightened color, occasioned by her thoughts and the morning exercise.

While she thus meditated there was a gentle knock at her chamber door and Monica came forward.

The Queen, who desired sympathy in her perplexity, rose and embraced the gentle woman. Then two kindred souls sat near each other on the Queen's couch and Costanza told Monica of the difficulties in the path of true love.

Monica was not surprised to learn of the Duke's attachment, nor yet to hear of the King's proposal. As a looker-on, she had read the signs better than the Queen, who was absorbed by one thought only.

Then Monica told the Queen of the rescue of Serapta, and how the Duke had sought her to implore the Queen's aid to restore the Princess to her husband.

"Your Majesty, I trust, will consent to one of the royal ships being prepared to bear the Princess to Constantinople. It is Serapta's fondest desire to rejoin the Prince and reach home before he can depart again in search of her."

"And is Serapta quite satisfied," replied the Queen, "that Prince Benoni is true to her?"

"If you knew the Prince, noble Queen, you would

never doubt his love for his wife. He is truth and devotion joined, and nothing could tempt him to forget his first and only love."

"And my Bismantua is the same, sweet Monica. They are brothers and alike in the depths of their affections. Oh, how sweet is love? It is heaven-sent to make the path of life endurable. What were life worth, true love being absent?"

And, as the Queen spoke, a soft hue of color stole over her face and it appeared illumined.

"Love is a faint sunbeam from the great realm of heaven, sent to brighten earth and make all nature beautiful," softly answered Monica.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE PURSUIT WITH BLOODHOUNDS. — THE TEMPLE FIRED.

About the same time that Alonso reached Savelona with news to the Duke de Bismantua of the safety of Serapta, a messenger arrived from Captain Athos to the Archbishop, Spenata, to notify the Princess' escape from the Tombs.

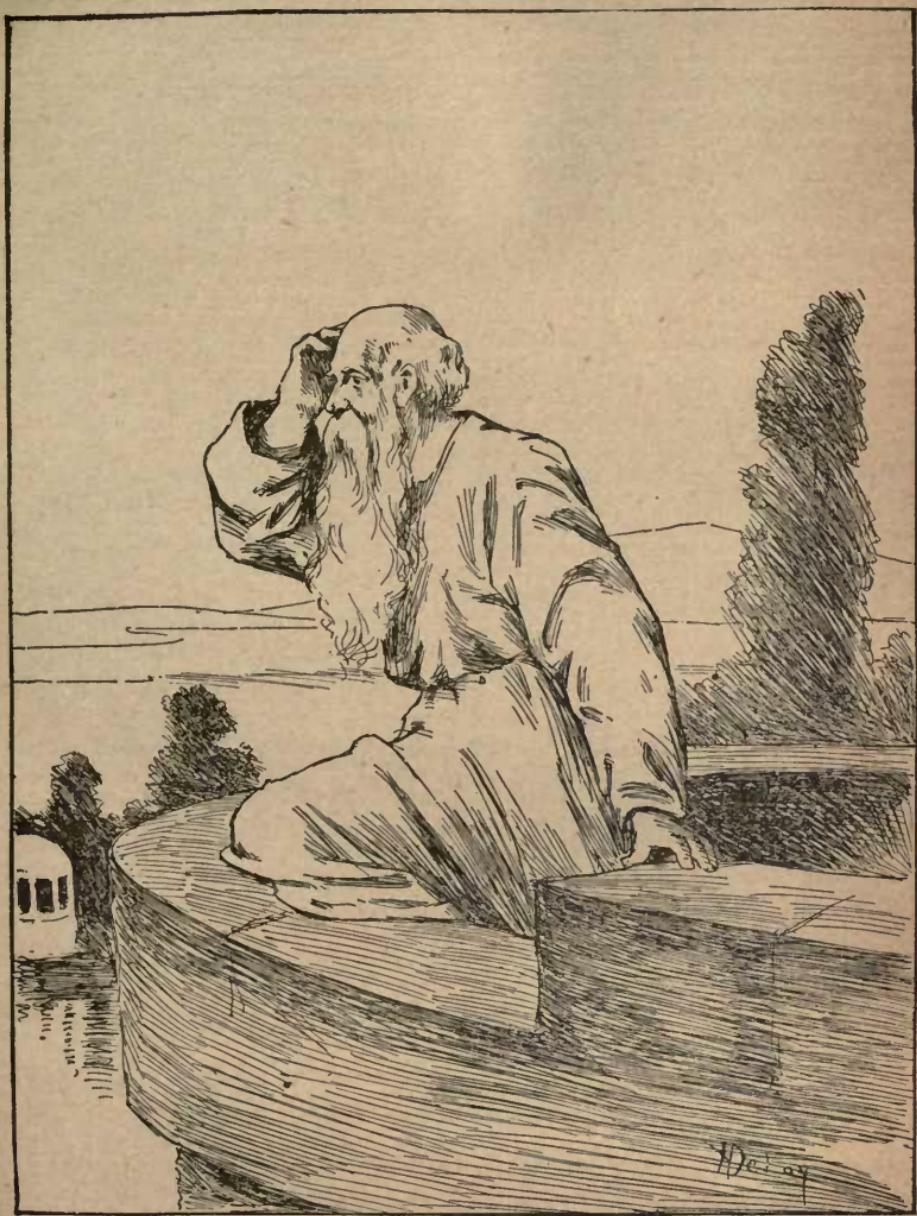
"And what means your master," said the Archbishop, "in allowing prisoners to escape? Surely more care ought to have been exercised. Return instantly and inform Pittrino and Athos that they must answer to me strictly unless the Princess is recaptured at once. Away, lose not a moment! Put the bloodhounds on the track, if necessary, and catch the bear and his keeper. They must be concealed in some of the caves. But harm not the Princess. Away!"

Thus commanded, the messenger hastened away, and reaching the Tombs a renewed search was made and bloodhounds were employed, but a heavy rain had destroyed the scent, and the men at the Tombs were compelled to acknowledge themselves beaten in the search.

This was a heavy blow to Athos and Pittrino. They placed Aleppo and the sentinel in chains, accusing them of assisting in the flight, and the subterranean way remained unknown.

Spenata, not hearing of the recapture of the Princess, determined to go in person and investigate.

He made a searching investigation of Buetto, Aleppo, and the sentinel, and ascertained about the bear and his keeper. Then he and Athos went alone to inspect the subterranean way, and here they found a clue to the es-



HE WATCHED FROM THE HIGH TOWER OF THE TEMPLE AND SAW THE MEN AND DOGS AS THEY EMERGED FROM THE SUBTERRANEAN WAY. See p. 227.



cape. This, however, could not be communicated to any others, but it rendered Spenata more angry than before, and he ordered punishments on the three men who had been concerned in admitting the bear-tamer and the bear.

He was too deeply implicated to punish Athos and Pittino, except by heaping upon them the most scornful expressions and giving vent to his anger.

He searched again in all directions and caused renewed inquiries to be made, but his attention was not called to the island of Lemnia, and he returned to Savelona boiling with rage against Harlez and Plenena.

While the Archbishop was thus instituting a search and making inquiries, Marcel and the Princess, with Coppia, were being royally entertained by Planos.

They were allotted apartments on the further side of the island where those who sought the temple as a sanctuary were placed, free from the observation of the students or any of the temple priests or attendants. They were the only persons at present occupying this safe retreat, and Planos could therefore visit them without any apprehension of discovery.

The old man often went to their rooms to converse with Marcel and the Princess, and Coppia was a favorite, and Planos was reminded of the days long past when Coppia's mother was a beloved companion of the old man."

"How well I remember your mother, Coppia," said Planos, looking with affection on the girl. "It seems only as yesterday since we used to stroll together through the Gardens of Sordello in the soft summer evenings." She was a gentle and loving sister; and now she has

passed away to her rest, while I, her elder brother, am left in solitude to fill out the measure of my days. And I, too, shall soon follow in the track, and then, Coppia, what shall you do for a home?"

"I am going, uncle," replied the girl, "with the Princess to her home, and she will be as a second mother to me."

"Would I could go, too," replied Planos. "I have lived such a lonely life on this island that I should be glad to end my days in peace, and nearer one of my kindred."

"Come with us, good Planos," said both the Princess and Marcel. "We will gladly receive you in our home."

"I will think of this," said Planos. "The voyage may be trying, and I might never live to see the Roman world. But what would that matter. I would as soon sleep in the cradle of the deep as lay my bones in earth."

"Dwell not sadly on the matter," said Marcel. "To die is as natural as to be born. Both are in the Creator's plan, and to sleep is good."

"Yes," replied Planos, "but what as to the awaking?" Where shall I be when this mortal puts on immortality?" Do we always sleep, or may we awake to endless misery?"

"Think not so, Planos," softly replied Serapta. "There is a way now opend to eternal life. Believe in Christ and be saved from all harm. He is the way, the truth, and the life."

"And is this the new Christian faith?" inquired the keeper of the mysteries. "I have heard that the missionary, Angelus, came from the Roman world to proclaim this truth. Alas, would I could believe, and find

peace for my troubled mind. I have long felt the need of certainty. Of late, since years have gathered around me, and the excitement of the ceremonies has passed away, I have often questioned my own faith. And now my life appears as nothing and wasted. And what is left for me but to fall asleep! Truly, the wise man calls all vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Dwell not thus moodily on life," replied Marcel. "The same wise man states that life is a gift of the Creator to be enjoyed and prized; and when we have filled the number of our days the spirit returns to Him who gave it."

"This, noble Marcel, is my only hope and trust. Of late I have lost the thought of hell. The Creator would never create but to destroy; and yet there are those who say that some are predestined to be eternally lost. What folly thus to think of the Almighty One who is just and good!"

The Princess listened with surprise to the expressions of Planos' thoughts.

"I should not have expected," she said, "to hear you speak thus, good Planos. As I saw the figures of the gods and the paintings throughout your temple I expected you worshipped only these. But, now, I find that you believe in the same God that I do. How is this?"

"The educated of all religions," replied the Priest, "has ever had a conception of the Almighty Father. The images are for the unlearned who cannot believe in an abstract god."

"But why present to them gods in which you do not yourself believe?" inquired Serapta.

"We do this for good," answered Planos. "It is bet-

ter for them to have a god in which they can believe than live without any conception of a Holy Power. But when all shall be educated these images shall pass away, and mankind will realize the beauty of the Great Creator, and the nobility of life on earth."

"Methinks," said the Princess, "you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Alas, Marcel, how foolish we Christians are to call such as these heathen."

"There you are right, Serapta," replied Marcel. "But I can well understand their doing so, for I am called heathen, infidel, and fool. And why is this? Because I am unable to believe in the evidences the Christians bring of the Divinity of Jesus."

"Then you are not a Christian?" inquired Planos.  
"To what Church do you belong, Marcel?"

"I belong," solemnly answered the young soldier, "to that great and universal creed that lets in all mankind, and is called, 'The Church of God!' The members of this Church have but one creed and one faith and that is that God is good and God is love, and doeth all things well. All mankind are admitted and none are lost."

"Take me into that Church," said the old Priest, "and let me be as a little child trusting a loving father. I am weary of all foolish creeds and ceremonial nonsense."

And thus these four conversed and beguiled away the time, which otherwise would have hung heavily upon them, and as the darkness of night wrapped the island in gloom they all retired to rest.

But, as the morning broke, a cry was heard in the apartments of the women, and Coppia announced that a son was born.

This filled the mind of Planos with deep concern. He

knew better than the others the dangers that surrounded the fugitives. He had heard reports of the steps taken to trace out the retreat, and he felt deeply for the Princess in this her hour of maternity.

But it was a lovely boy, and the mother hugged it to her heart and kissed it fondly.

Ah, thou dear pledge of our fond love, how thou shalt comfort and console me in my solitude. How delighted Benoni will be.

Thus mused the happy Princess, and the present joy cast out all fear. But when the eighth day came a sudden pang shot through her mind.

“Alas, the babe is not baptized, and Eusebius and Lactantius said that all unbaptized children go to hell. Oh, my sweet babe, art thou in peril of this dreadful place? What shall I do?”

And she spoke to Coppia:

“Alas, Coppia, what shall I do about my babe? It is now eight days old and is not yet baptized.”

“Well, fair Princess,” replied the girl, “what matters this? Surely no harm can come to such a sweet boy for want of baptism?”

“You know not, Coppia, the Christian beliefs. Every unbaptized child is doomed to perdition; and if my beloved one should pass away I should die of grief knowing my neglect had doomed it to such misery.”

“But such ideas are unnatural,” replied the servant. “If this is Christianity, then it is worse than idolatry, and I would rather be as I am. Shall I speak to my uncle and ask him to baptize the child?”

“Worse and worse, Coppia. Only one who believes in Christ and his Divinity can baptize my babe. Oh,

what shall I do? I would Monica and Angelus were here."

"I will speak to the noble Marcel," said the maid. "Perhaps as he knows the Christian plans he may suggest some way out of the difficulty. Shall I ask him to come and see you?"

The Princess gave permission, and Coppia, having prepared the chamber, went in search of the young soldier.

"The Princess desires to see you," said Coppia. "There is some religious difficulty about the child. Will you come with me, noble Marcel?"

And the young man passed forward into the chamber sacred to maternity, musing as he went:

"What a wonderful thing is this young life! A few days back and it was not, and now it is here for weal or woe. Who can foretell what its life will be. Will it fade like a flower nipped in the bud, or will it live through the three score years and ten, filling the allotted lease of life, and then fall asleep?"

"Marcel," said the Princess, "behold my bonny babe, Benoni in miniature. But I am sad to-day, as there is a difficulty. My babe must be baptized."

"Think not of the matter," replied Marcel. There is no Christian priest in this temple, and it would not be safe to bring one here."

"But if the child die, Marcel, it will be lost forever; and this would be my doing. Oh, what shall I do? I can have no peace of mind until the little one is christened."

"I will speak to Planos, dear Princess, and see what can be done."

"But he cannot baptize the babe, Marcel. It must be

done by a Christian priest, who believes in the atonement of Christ to save from the taint of original sin."

"Alas, Serapta," sorrowfully replied the young soldier, "what chains of vain sorrow this sad Christianity places on its believers. Imagine a good and just God punishing your babe forever because a few drops of water are not sprinkled over its face."

"It is not the water, Marcel, it is the benediction and the acceptance of the little one into the visible Church on earth which entitles it to Heaven if it die in infancy. And if not baptized its little soul will go straight to that dreadful place, and be in torment forever."

Marcel looked upon the troubled countenance of the young mother, and his mind took on a sadness that such dogmas could disturb so pure a soul as hers, and as his thoughts quickly took in the situation, they passed forward to Mona, and for her sake he said:

"I will to Savelona, fair Princess, and confer with Bishop Angelus and Monica; and if they can visit you safely I am certain they will come to you. But dare you be left here alone?"

"Think not of me, Marcel. I think only of the child. If you will bring Monica and Angelus my thanks will ever be yours."

Thus it was arranged that Marcel should proceed to Savelona, and he sought the keeper of the mysteries to confer on the safest means of doing so.

While this conversation was proceeding, Captain Athos, stung by the reproaches of Spenata, and urged forward by the promises of reward if he captured the Princess, was revolving in his cunning mind the best means of accomplishing this end.

The Archbishop had given Athos and Pittrino full power over the three men placed in chains, and they determined to try more forcible means of obtaining information.

Summoning Aleppo and the sentinel into their presence, Athos showed them the torture chamber, saying:

"You are acquainted with these openers of the mind and know that they possess a power when skillfully used. It is absurd to suppose that four persons could escape from these Tombs without your knowledge and assistance. We ask you again to be open and tell us what transpired between you and your prisoners or those who assisted in their escape. If your disclosures result in their capture I am authorized to extend the Queen's pardon. Inform us, therefore, where these prisoners were to proceed and their mode of escape."

"We have already stated all we know of the matter," replied the sentinel. "I regret admitting the bear and his keeper, but I thought no wrong and never contemplated any danger from such rough and uncouth means."

"And I," said Aleppo, "showed the bear-tamer to the den and never imagined they were ought but what they seemed. I have nothing more to tell than that I have already disclosed. I can only suppose that they got away through magic, and that I was thrown into a deep sleep, for I heard no sound of any kind."

"The magic," said Athos angrily, "was the Tomb wine which got into your head and stole your wits away. But we will try what the twin-screws will do, perhaps they may remind you of the events leading up to this catastrophe. Heigh, attendant, seize these men and apply the screws."

And forth came two men of strong build, and taking Aleppo between them into the adjoining room, fixed on each finger and thumb powerful screws. Then, turning a huge wheel, each joint was strained, causing intense pain. But Aleppo uttered not a moan.

“Will you now reveal all you know respecting this escape?” said Athos, looking angrily upon the sufferer. “Or must we try the rack? Now we have begun we will have no mercy.”

“I have nothing further to reveal,” said Aleppo, “do your worst, and kill me if you must.”

“We want not to kill you,” said Pettrino, “but we are greatly blamed by the Archbishop, Spenata, and our duty requires us to use every means to force you to confess, so that the Princess may be captured.”

“As I know nothing beyond what I have already mentioned, this torture is useless cruelty,” replied Aleppo.

Athos, who was more vindictive than his colleague, replied:

“We will try another plan, and place both of you on the rack. Heigh, attendants, enter, and lay these two men at once on the bed of penitence. Proceed, we follow to hear what they will say.”

And upon this six other men came forward and stretched the unfortunate Aleppo and the sentinel upon the rack. The wheels were turned and the bones came from their sockets. Athos looked on with fiendish hate, and again asked the men to confess all they knew.

Again they stated that they had told all; but Athos believed them not and commanded the wheels to be turned still further.

This was done and the wounded men fainted.

“ It is enough,” said Athos, “ have the men taken from the rack, and watch them in their weakness and worm out their secrets. Come, Pittrino, I have thought of another plan for arriving at the whereabouts of this skulking bear and his keeper. Depend upon it this keeper was that arrogant Roman who boasted so loudly a short time back, and the bear was his servant. I should like to get him in my power. I would rack his bones for him and test his power of endurance.”

Thus had Athos worked himself into a feeling of intense hatred. He was a most ambitious man, and desired to mount the ladder of promotion through the Archbishop, whose tool he was.

Therefore, to be outwitted by the Roman was as gall and wormwood to him.

“ Pittrino, I have sent to Savelona for my favorite bloodhounds, Pola and Pontius, and on their arrival, which I expect to-night, I desire your approval to their going to the den occupied by the bear and his keeper, and the chambers occupied by the Princess and the maid. Have these been occupied since the flight ? ”

“ No one has been there since the escape of the Princess, and you are welcome to visit both places, and take any other course that you think well. I am most desirous to secure the missing Princess, as the Archbishop sets so much store by her.”

Thus it was arranged, and Athos awaited anxiously the arrival of his faithful hounds. He had used them previously in the search for runaways, and never found them fail. He hoped, therefore, by their means to ascertain the direction the fugitives had taken.

He had not long to wait. A bull-dog-faced man was

ushered into his presence, leading, by a strong chain, two ferocious bloodhounds.

"Avenus," said Athos, addressing the leader of the dogs, "thou hast been speedy in obeying my commands. Are the dogs in good mood for a long and dangerous run, and canst thou insure their obedience to my will?"

"The dogs are well nigh famishing," replied the man, looking sullenly upon his master, "and will make short work of any man or beast they are required to trace, unless I prepare them for moderation. What is it that you want of us, Captain Athos?"

The human beast was quite content to classify himself with the four-legged animals, and it is more than probable that the keeper was at heart more blood-thirsty than the dogs, and less amenable to reason and command.

"It will be necessary," said Athos, "that I should blindfold you for a time. There are secrets connected with the Tombs which may not be discovered. But I shall lead you and you need not fear."

The man smiled scornfully as he replied:

"Fear! What is that? I have not experienced any feeling of such kind, and it is too late to have it now and with my faithful hounds near me ready to tear to pieces any one who shall do me harm. I must explain to them what is required, otherwise your attempt to blindfold me would be disastrous to you."

And as Athos took from his shoulders a scarf and was about to place it over the keeper's eyes, the man spoke to the dogs:

"Be quiet, Pontius! Pola, be still! Your master will receive no harm."

And he patted the dogs on the head, and brought them

near to him, as the scarf was bound over his eyes. This done, Captain Athos led the man and dogs to the den where Alonso and Marcel were before the escape, and from there Aenus and the dogs were taken to the chambers occupied by the Princess and Coppia.

"Is there any article of wearing apparel?" said Aenus. "If so, give it to me, as it will aid the search."

Captain Athos looked around and seeing the slippers which the women had thrown hastily aside in their flight, handed them to the keeper.

"Heigh, Pola and Pontius, prepare for the search. Come, let us away."

And Captain Athos led the road to the subterranean way; and the dogs sniffed the scent as they hastened forward, and Aenus knew that they were in the direction taken by the fugitives.

"All is right, Captain," continued the man; "nothing will save the prisoners except running through water, nor will this, if the scent can be got again after it is passed. But if the runaways have had to wade, and been in the water long without shoes, we may have trouble. All we have now to do is to make the utmost speed while the dogs are so eager for the chase. Heigh, Pontius, hark, away! Well done Pola."

Thus, cheering the dogs, the subterranean way was soon cleared and the open country reached, and the hounds were as eager as ever and went straight to the shore.

This being reached, Captain Athos felt that he might take off the scarf from the keeper's eyes.

The dogs uttered a joyous bark as though they real-

ized that their keeper had suffered some restraint which was now removed.

He tried to draw them from the shore, but it was a fruitless attempt, and Avenus felt the fugitives had crossed the stream.

“Ah,” said Athos, “I had not thought of this retreat. Depend upon it; the fugitives have taken sanctuary in the ancient temple. But how came Planos to take them in without any order from the state?”

To this the keeper could give no response, but said:

“I know not how it comes about that the prisoner and her friends have got shelter in the temple of the gods but this I do know, that they have passed over from this side in a boat, and if we can get one at once, and take the hounds across, they will be found if still there, and if not we can probably take up the scent.”

Seeing a boat at some little distance away, Athos hailed the boy who was about to seat himself with the oars:

“Come hither, boy, with thy boat, and row us over to the island of Lemnia. We will pay thee well.”

The boy rowed forward to where Athos and Avenus stood with the dogs, but was evidently afraid when he noticed the ferocity of the animals.

“The dogs are too fierce, and the dangers of approaching the temple of the gods too great, that unless you belong to the court, I dare not go,”

Captain Athos calmed the fears of the boy, and assured him he would be serving the Queen by doing as was asked, and that the dogs should do him no harm.

“And unless you comply at once,” added Athos, “the

dogs shall swim out to you and upset you from the boat and bring it to us."

The keeper, noticing the terror of the boy, instigated the dogs to give tongue, and this ruse brought the youth to the shore, and men and dogs got into the boat, and Avenus, seizing an oar, soon aided the boy in reaching the island.

The dogs eagerly sprang from the boat ere it reached the shore, and the keeper saw they had taken up the scent, and pointed this out, in high glee, to Athos.

"There, boy," said the Captain, "is money for you and you may row back to the main land. You have done us a good turn, and if ever you visit the Palace of the Tombs ask for Captain Athos, of the Queen's guard, and I will repay your efforts further. Now, away!"

The dogs had gone far ahead and the keeper and Captain hastened after them, hoping to gain admission without any difficulty. In this, however, they were disappointed. The keeper of the mysteries, aided by the old gate-keeper, had kept a strict watch. Marcel having left for Savelona, Planos felt that the safety of the Princess and his niece depended upon his watchfulness, and the old man was deeply touched by the gentleness of Serapta and the arrival of the son had awakened tender feelings in the heart of the childless old man.

"I can now be of little use to the world," he mused, "but ere I depart I may save this gentle woman and her son much suffering. She evidently has a powerful enemy who will never rest until he has effected her ruin or is himself undone. It is that hateful Spenata, who is cruelty personified."

He therefore watched from the high tower of the temple and saw the men and dogs as they emerged from the subterranean way, and took every precaution to guard against surprise.

“Niseba,” he said, addressing the old gate-keeper, “there is danger coming this way. I see two men, with dogs, scouring the country. They are evidently blood-hounds and have got the scent of those who are now under our protection. You must aid me, Niseba, in preventing the men and dogs from gaining admission here. Draw up the bridge. Close all the inlets and make the temple inaccessible. I will away and remove the women to the best place of safety.”

And the kind old man hastened to the women’s department. He looked with affectionate regard upon Serapta and her son and on Coppia, and addressing the Princess, said:

“It is necessary for me to remove you to a place of greater safety, for now the soldier has left I must supply his place. Come with me, and I will take you where nothing can harm you, and whence you may readily escape in case of need.”

And Planos led the way to an inner room. This was unknown to the women, and they could not themselves have discovered it. The doorway, leading to the room, was formed in imitation of the adjoining masonry, and so constructed by close padding as to prevent the sound of hollowness if tapped by the hand, or by any hard substance.

The Priest carefully closed the door after them, and drew across the center of the passage-way a huge block of stone which he secured by bolts from the inside. Thus

giving from the other side the appearance of a closet only.

When the women had entered the inner room, Planos drew another stone door across the entrance and fastened it securely with iron pegs. By these means it was hoped that the Princess and Coppia and the child would be safe from discovery.

The light was admitted from the roof and this was inaccessible from the outside.

“Here,” said the Priest, “you will be safe from danger, but lest there should be a surprise I will shew you a means of escape.”

And walking to the other side of the room he touched a hidden spring and a huge block of stone moved slowly away leaving sufficient space for any person to pass through the opening.

Then they appeared standing in a closet, and some stone steps projecting conveyed the idea that it was for storing provisions only.

“On these slabs,” said the Priest, “you may place milk and honey and anything required for daily consumption. The less design in the arrangement and the more likely to convey the impression that the recess is for this purpose only. But if you will stoop somewhat you will find a concealed spring. Touch this and the door will move back and give you access to a mode of escape which has been contrived with the greatest ingenuity.”

And here Planos showed Coppia and the Princess how to use this means of exit and the way to secure the doors after passing through, and also explained how to leave a swing trap-door so that by the lightest tread any person

stepping upon it would be precipitated into the depths below.

The women and Planos passed safely over this door, and on reaching the other side the Priest let it partially drop so as to show the mode of action.

The women looked back with horror upon the frightful depth over which they had passed, and the Priest, noticing the blanched cheek of Serapta, said:

“ You need not hesitate, fair Princess, to set this trap, for it will only catch those who mean you harm. The only other person who knows of this way of escape is the old gate-keeper, Niseba, and he is also acquainted with the means of testing whether the bridge is safe to pass over. In case of your escaping by this road set the trap in the way I have pointed out, secure the doors on each side, and pass on your way without fear, for nothing can harm you after you once reach this place.”

And the old man carefully repeated the mode of proceeding until the women stated they were able to follow the instructions; then, restoring the trap securely, the women passed back into the inner room while Planos proceeded through another way to the entrance to the temple.

Here he saw Athos and Aenus, with the dogs, trying every means of access. The hounds were barking furiously and foaming at the mouth, and the old gate-keeper was watching from a concealed tower, awaiting the Priest’s return.

“ The women are safely lodged,” said Planos, addressing the faithful old servant, “ and I have explained the way of escape in case of need. The dogs are loud in their call for admission, and the men are beside them-

selves with rage. I will speak to them and ascertain what they really require."

Thus saying, the Priest, with his attendant, went to the upper balcony and spoke to the men below.

"What mean you," said the Priest, "by approaching this sacred temple with the dogs, and disturbing our meditations? Know you not that no dogs are admitted within these sacred walls?"

"The walls you call sacred are so no longer," said Athos. "The Archbishop, Spenata, has introduced a new faith, and this shows that this temple was a place of lies, and dedicated to Satan, the father of lies."

"Captain Athos, I know you well as a tool of the Priest, Spenata," replied the keeper of the mysteries. "You are ever ready to do that bad man's dirty work. But why you should come here with bloodhounds to disturb our peace is more than I can tell. Away from this; or we shall use means to silence the barking of the hounds. So long as I remain keeper of the mysteries this island shall be free from vile dogs, and from men equally vile, and more deceitful and wicked."

This speech, which was uttered with cutting sarcasm, told upon the excitable temperment of Athos, who fairly foamed with anger, and taking up a stone he threw it towards the balcony, but the two men moved behind the buttress and it passed them without harm.

"If this continues," said Planos to his attendant, "we must summon our temple staff and pour heated oil and clay and pitch upon the men, and get out the slings and force the men and dogs from the sacred ground."

"Wait awhile," said the more cautious gate-keeper, "perhaps they will weary of the attempt to storm the keep, and it would make them furious, and Athos would return with his soldiers and take us by storm. Remember the day has passed when we can frighten intruders away from the island by religious superstition. Whenever an old faith dies, the old powers of mummery die with it."

And as Niseba spake he heaved a heavy sigh of regret at the waning of the old religion. He had been on the island from a boy, and had seen the worshippers gradually grow fewer in numbers, and his fees grow less and less.

"I have long seen a dark cloud resting over this island, Niseba," sorrowfully said the old Priest, "and the time has arrived when we should leave the old place. I have treasures laid up in store, and will gladly share them with you, Niseba. We will away with Coppia and the Princess to their northern home, and there end our days in peace."

Niseba was deeply moved at this generous offer of the Priest, and kneeling down, as in days of yore, embraced the knees of the old keeper of the mysteries.

"Noble master," said Niseba, "I thank you for your kind offer of protection and aid to your old servant, but it cannot be. I am too withered to be uprooted and transplanted to another earthly clime. The sands in my life's hour-glass are nearly run out, and I am weary of this changing life, and would test the great beyond. You escape with the women and fresh young life, and leave me here to raise a beacon to light your progress hence. Thus will your escape be fully secured, for men will say all have perished in the flames; and the students,

and all but me, may leave the sacred temple and seek newer faiths and creeds; I am too old to change."

Thus sadly spoke the white-haired old man, who had seen the young students come and go, professing to have received Heaven's inspiration and revelations to mankind. But he felt all was "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal," and groundless as shadows in the desert.

While master and man conversed the shouting of the men and the angry barking of the dogs increased; but in vain were all their efforts to gain admission.

Captain Athos, finding himself baffled in his attempt, determined to try the power of the laws upon the aged Priest; and, desiring Avenus to keep the dogs within bounds, thus spoke:

"Planos, keeper of the mysteries, and this ancient temple, I call upon you in the name of the Queen to give us admission to this property of her Majesty. You, like myself, are but a servant of the State, and must obey the laws. I hold the State warrant, signed by the great Archbishop of Savelona, for the apprehension of the Princess Serapta and Coppia, and the two men who aided her escape, Marcel and Alonso. These are hiding in the sanctuary of this temple, and you, as keeper of the mysteries, are aiding and abetting their escape. If you refuse to deliver up the fugitives I will return with soldiers and storm the temple and take you by force. Are you prepared, Planos, to give up the Princess Serapta and those who assisted her flight from the Tombs?"

The old man, in a clear voice, immediately replied:

"Never shall the wicked eyes of your hateful Archbishop again gaze on the sweet and pure face of the Princess he has dared to persecute. Let this be your

answer and his. I will guard and protect those who have sought the shelter of this sanctuary."

Athos gnashed his teeth with rage as he replied:

"Then we will burn you in your hole, for now I know that they whom I seek are within these walls."

The keeper of the mysteries had not waited to hear this reply, but drawing Niseba aside he said:

"I go to liberate those unprotected ones who have fled to me for shelter. Come, old friend, we will go together. Heed not your age, I will do all to ease your pains and look after you as I look after myself. We have been together so many years that I cannot part with you. And see, these wicked men have already got together fagots to burn down the doors and gain admission. Come, there is not a moment to lose."

"Niseba looked down from the balcony and saw that Athos and Aenus were busily engaged in placing brushwood and logs to light a fire.

"I will away to liberate the students," the old man said, "and join you at the opening of the subterranean way. But wait not for me to the endangering of the women and yourself."

The two men without, lost no time in proceeding with their diabolical work, and the fire soon crackled and burnt down the strong oaken door, and with a yell of triumph they passed through the opening followed by the dogs.

The hounds soon took up the scent, and reached the chamber where the Princess and Coppia had first dwelt. Then bounding through the opening which Niseba had left they reached a concealed trap. Here the dogs became furious as they were stopped proceeding further.

They whined and threw themselves against the slab approaching the subterranean way. Athos and his companion tried to find an outlet, but were baffled, and deep anger took possession of the men.

Above the concealed door there was a slight opening for air, and through this Niseba watched the movements of men and dogs. He felt the smoke coming up from the deep shaft and knew there was no time to lose if he intended to save his own life, but his feelings of humanity prompted him to give Athos and his companion another chance, and he said:

“ You vile and wicked men to desecrate the temple set apart for worship to deity and turn it into a place of persecution. Will you retreat from this building and cease to hunt for the Princess and her friends ? ”

“ Never,” replied Athos, “ will I retreat until I have you and old Planos and the others in my grasp, and I will torture the souls of you in the torture chamber of the Tombs, and your bodies shall be given to the fowls of the air.”

“ Proud boaster, you know not how near you are to perdition ! I have but to touch a spring and hell itself will open and receive you in its flames.”

“ Hell, there is no hell ! ” said Athos.

“ And you, Aenus,” said the old gate-keeper, “ will you whistle your dogs away and save your life and theirs ? If not, you must share the fate of the wicked man who has lead you to commit this wrong. Decide, will you have life or death ? ”

Athos looked towards Aenus, who was prepared to accept the offer of his life, for he was awed by the mysterious surroundings, but Athos jeeringly said:

"Heed not the ravings of this demented maniac, but let us find the way to reach the boasting fool."

Thus urged, Avenus returned to where the dogs were springing up the wall to catch the old gate-keeper. Niseba felt their hot breath on his cheek and knew that every moment was of value, and, therefore, said:

"I will give you time to cross this circular room, and if you accept it not, then your blood be on your heads. Remember, I warn you that I can kill you in a second of time. I will count three, and if you are in this room at the sound of the last number, you and the dogs shall have immediate death."

The men still tried to find an opening to the gate-keeper, but failed to find the concealed spring; and the dogs sprang up to the air openings and held there by their claws.

Slowly the old man cried out, "One," then "Two," and pausing, said:

"Yet a moment more before I pronounce your doom. There is still time to save yourselves."

Athos and Avenus, who by this time began to think the old gate-keeper was trying to frighten them, continued their search.

"You are fooling us," said Athos. "We are too old to be frightened by religious mummery, and fear no lightning stroke from heaven. If you could have done anything you would have kept us out of this temple. As we have got thus near to you all, we will follow on the quest until we reach you."

"That you never will," replied Niseba, "and now your time has come. Cast your eyes to Heaven for pardon and forgiveness for all your sins, for here and here-

after you will have no further chance. Still a second more before I pronounce the fatal number that summons you to Heaven or hell."

The old man lingered ere pronouncing the fatal number which he knew would mean instantaneous death. He would not thus have delayed had he not known that his old master and the women were beyond harm, and for his own life he cared not.

This waiting only emboldened the men, and they cheered on the dogs to pull down the masonry with their claws, and a good sized opening was made, so that Niseba was exposed to view, and Athos and Aenus jeered at him, saying that they would soon draw him from his cage.

"I now utter the fatal number 'Three,'" said the old man, "and you shall still have time to make for the opening through which you came. But your time is growing short, and you have nearly filled up the measure of your iniquities."

The men still jeered and laughed, and as the dogs pulled more masonry down, Niseba continued:

"If nothing will serve you but instant destruction then take what you richly deserve."

And he touched the hidden spring and the men and dogs fell into the abyss below. Smoke ascended and the old man knew the ancient temple was doomed.

He waited no longer, but leaving the opening followed his master and the women down the subterranean way.





SHE TRIPPED ALONG GAILY AND HER HEART RESPONDED TO THE MORNING'S BEAUTY. See p. 248.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FATE OF THE UNBAPTIZED CHILD.—SANDY FOUNDATIONS GIVING WAY.

While these events were taking place on the island of Lemnia, Marcel had reached Savelona. After paying his respects to the Queen, he sought out Bishop Angelus and Monica and the Duke de Bismantua, and narrated the birth of a son, and how the Princess was safely cared for by Planos and Coppia.

“But,” he added, “Serapta is greatly concerned as to the baptism of her child, and besought me to come to the Bishop and arrange for the ceremony to be performed.”

“We are pleased to see you, Marcel,” replied the Duke, “but surely the baptism might wait until it can be done in Constantinople or Rome. What is the cause of the hurry? Is the child likely to die? And if so, methinks, baptized or unbaptized, it would reach Heaven.”

“That, unfortunately, is not the view entertained by the Princess,” said Marcel. “She has formed the notion that if the babe should die unbaptized, it will be lost eternally. This is the orthodox view, is it not, most worthy Bishop?”

Angelus, thus appealed to, looked sorrowfully upon his friends as he replied:

“This is truly one of the strong doctrines of the Christian Church. It arises through another belief, and that is the doctrine of original sin; and the Church believes that all unbaptized infants have always gone straight to perdition. Alas,” he added mournfully, “that I should have to admit such a faith. To me it

appears most inconsistent with the expressions of Jesus, who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not.'

"Jesus made no question," said Marcel, "as to whether they had received baptism or not. Yet, according to the theory of the Christian Church, they could not be accepted unless baptized. Jesus inquired not this far; neither did He ask of the dying thief whether he had been baptized, but said, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'

"Oh, Monica," said the Bishop, looking lovingly upon his wife, "all do not possess your breadth of thought, nor high view of Deity. Yet, if it will comfort our sweet sister, we will arrange for the christening of the child at once. We shall require sponsors but they can no doubt be found amongst us."

"If I may accompany you, Angelus," said Monica, "I should be glad. Dear Serapta and I were as sisters, and it would cheer her for me to be near to her at this trying time."

"Spoken like your noble self," said the Bishop. "You think not of any danger to yourself, but only of your friend. It shall, however, be as you wish, and I and my wife will return with you, Marcel, whenever you are ready to start."

"There is great danger," said Marcel. "I hear the keepers at the Tombs are highly incensed at our rescuing the Princess from their hands and are using every means to re-capture her. Do you think, Bismantua, that we can obtain protection for the Princess and child and the maid from the Queen?"

"I fear," replied the Duke, "that her Majesty cannot

openly give any assistance. She is afraid of her father, and just now the King of Sepania stands in the way. But we may see the Chief, Durana, and his noble son, Orlando, and possibly obtain such an escort as would make it safe for the Bishop and Monica to travel to the ancient temple."

"Let us away to them," eagerly said Marcel. "And you, worthy Bishop, be ready with Monica to leave as speedily as possible."

And the Duke, with the young soldier, quickly left the room in search of the Chief.

"I cannot leave at present," said Durana, on being applied to, "as this visit of the King of Sepania requires my personal attendance in the capital, but I will spare my son if he will undertake the duty."

The young Chief expressed his readiness to start at once, and summoning a score of his reliable men, placed himself at their head, along with the Duke and Marcel, and they passed quickly forward to join the Bishop and Monica.

But a deep sadness fell upon the Duke, and Marcel noticed that he had not offered to accompany them.

"Bismantua," said the young Roman, "do not let us drag you from the court if there is any reason for your staying here. I have fancied you may prefer to delay joining us until the departure of King Pinto."

As Marcel said this, he noticed the color rise on the Duke's cheek, and knew he had struck a powerful reason for delay, and was not, therefore, surprised when the Duke replied:

"Marcel, I will be open with you. There is a strong cause for my staying here a little longer. I love the

Queen and my affection is returned, but the Archbishop wants Costanza to marry King Pinto."

"And does the Queen favor the King's suit at all?" inquired Marcel.

"Even if I were no impediment, Marcel, the Queen would never marry the King. His addresses are most objectionable to her; yet for State purposes, she is compelled to receive him courteously. Besides, Costanza fears her father, as well as King Pinto."

"Alas, poor Queen," sorrowfully said Marcel, "who would court royalty, whose crowns are set in thorns as well as diamonds."

"These are the views of her I love," replied the Duke, looking with gratitude upon his friend, "and she is prepared to accept my humble home, and we only await the departure of King Pinto to put the matter to the test, and if the Archbishop refuses the alliance, the Queen will marry me and take all the risk."

"If you want a friend," said Marcel, taking the hand of the Duke and pressing it, "command me in all things. Remain here, and may true love run smoothly."

"Alas," said Bismantua, "I fear in our case there are many hills of difficulty to surmount, but we live in hopes of overcoming them. I need not say that my communication must be confined to the three friends who accompany you. Orlando is a noble youth, and his aid would be valuable. With two such friends as you and he I should never fear success."

The Duke wished them a safe journey, and told the Bishop not to damp the ardor of the babe by too deep immersion in the water, and Angelus rode sorrowfully away, leaving the Duke behind.

Angelus had been greatly exercised and deeply studious in his research for the evidences of Christianity, and this anxiety of Serapta as to the baptism of the child had raised again the thoughts as to the actual mission and work of the Saviour.

“Alas,” he said, speaking in low tones to Monica, who shared his fullest confidence in all things, “this request of the noble Princess has brought before me another phase of Christian doctrine. Knowing as I do the sweetness and purity of thought and character of this worthy Christian I am shocked to think of this matter troubling her. And if such an one as she have deep concern what must the more ignorant Christians have?”

“There is nothing in the Christian scriptures,” replied Monica, “which justifies this theory. Truly, it is amongst the inventions of mankind referred to by Solomon. The Deity has made the babe perfect in mind and in body and adapted in every respect for the purpose for which it has come into the world. I am greatly surprised how mankind, from age to age, goes on so perfectly. Truly, the Creator must be great and wise to so make man that through all the ages he comes into the world well adapted for the design of the Creator. Deity would never mar His work by undoing it for want of mere ceremony.”

“Reason tells me, Monica,” sorrowfully answered the Bishop, “that you are right, but our Christian masters say that you are wrong.”

“This may have been allowed to pass, Angelus, in the dark days that have gone before when men were saturated with the ideas of Deity as a punisher, but now greater knowledge is prevailing on the earth, and these

ideas must give place to the light of reason and research."

"I would, dear Monica, that the Almighty would teach and guide me into the truth on this and all Christian subjects."

"Be not weary, my beloved Angelus, for your careful and prayerful research must bring you to the truth; and when discovered be not afraid to proclaim the result to all the Christian world, even though you find the Church in error in many things."

The Bishop was greatly comforted by the sweet sympathy of his wife, and looked upon her as well read in the scriptures of the Christians and other nations, and he replied:

"Your happy and trustful disposition, Monica, is a great support to me. I remember my consecration oaths, and at times, the trial of my faith is very great. But He in whom I trust will give me light."

"How peaceful to have trust in Him who created us," replied Monica. "And He only can give us light."

Thus this pair, bound together by the dearest ties of love and sympathy, conversed on their way to the ancient temple of the gods. But what was their surprise when they approached the shore to find no temple there. Nothing remained but a heap of ashes and the blackened stone supports.

"Alas," exclaimed Marcel, to what a fearful end has this superstitious idea of the Princess led! To save the soul of the babe, which was never in danger, all have been laid in the dust."

He had made inquiries, and all stated that no one escaped except the students, and these declared no woman

had come from the temple. One who was addressed replied:

“When the old gate-keeper, Niseba, came to release us he said, as he left us, ‘I am going to release others from the fire.’ But we saw nothing more of him, nor the keeper of the mysteries, nor any others; and we believe they who set fire to the temple have perished in the flames.”

The boy, too, was found who rowed Athos and Aenus and the dogs over to the island, and he said:

“I was here long after I returned from the ancient temple. I heard the loud barking of the dogs and the men encouraging them. Then I saw the fire, but no boats left the island until the students came.”

A search was instituted amongst the ruins, and near the center of the foundations they found the charred remains of human beings and dogs, but so disfigured that identification was impossible. Yet they made out that they were not the remains of those they sought, for certain articles near them showed that one was Athos, and the other they conjectured was Aenus, and the bones of the dogs near to them.

“Then,” said Marcel, “these wicked men have had a righteous punishment. But, alas, this does not restore those we are in search of.”

And Monica mourned and wept, feeling that there was no hope that her who was so dear as a sister was still on earth.

“But,” she said, “the noble Princess and her sweet babe have reached the happy sphere where the pure in heart always see God. She was ever ready for the call, but poor desolate Benoni, how can we reveal this to thee?”

Thus the large, loving heart of Monica thought of the deep loneliness of him who was left behind.

"May we go to the Prince Benoni?" added Monica. "The loss must be broken to him gently, and who can do it like you, Angelus?"

"We will go, my love, to Constantinople, and when there, Monica, I can refer to all the outside evidences of Christianity. I shall never rest until I have fully investigated the truth or falsehood of the doctrines I am consecrated to teach."

"I have often wondered," said Monica, "that these proofs and this research are not insisted upon before the priests are ordained. How is it, Angelus, that the priests and bishops do not investigate all religions before they enter the ministry?"

"That is not necessary, Monica," sadly replied Angelus. "They must profess to be Christians before they are received for instruction. They enter the divinity schools to be taught how to expound the truth, not to search for it. The present bishops lay down the truth and the young candidates must assent, or be expelled from the schools."

"This is a strange procedure, and there must be many heartaches in the ministry, such as yours, Angelus," said Monica, "Methinks the plan is all wrong."

"And what course would you pursue, Monica," inquired Angelus, much interested in the discussion. "I know your training must have been very different from mine, for your views are broader and your conception of Deity higher."

"I would lay before the candidates for the ministry all the evidences of truth, not only of Christianity, but of all

the religions of the earth. I would have them study the growth of these faiths and read carefully all the outside histories in confirmation. Especially as to Christianity I would lay before these young men the writings of the great and good men who wrote of the times when Jesus of Nazareth was on earth — Pliny, Suetonius, Josephus, Tacitus and others. I would also submit for their consideration the writings and sayings of Zoroaster, Confucius, Guitama, Plato, and others, so as to show exactly what Jesus of Nazareth really revealed that was not in the world before He came."

"I see you are in the right, Monica," replied the Bishop. "Alas, that I did not adopt this course before I was ordained a priest. I read none of these writings. I knew not what was in the world before Jesus came. My mother, with her loving heart, spoke of the beauty of the Christian faith. She showed me the sublimity of the sermon on the mount. She knew not what was new nor what was old. To her these words were as inspired of God, nay, God's own utterances; and we were all familiar with the thoughts that gods visited the earth. But this last was really, truly God. All the others were men's imaginations. Alas, I see, I professed Christianity ere I searched for the reasons of my faith."

"And thus," sadly replied Monica, "it is with the thousands of professing Christians and with many of the priests. They are hedged around in infancy and kept from investigation until the profession has become recognized, and then to many it appears too late to search."

"That was so with me, Monica," replied the Bishop, "and but for the discussion as to the holy ones I should have slept on without research. My mother had touched

my heart when young, and belief had grown stronger with my years. But, when I look for the reasons of my faith, I find them built on the sandy foundations of uncertainty, and that they stood together only through the cementing of my mother's love, and now the winds of doubt are shaking the superstructure built upon love alone without research."

"It has been stated," said Monica, "by one learned in the schools, that Christian Theism insists that a revelation has been made from the Creator, and that such revelation is a plain historical truth susceptible of historical proof. And he adds that on any other supposition, the repeated utterances of Christ and the Apostles are either impious blasphemy or ridiculous nonsense. 'Verily,' he concludes, 'God has spoken to man, or the whole Christian system is a stupendous and blasphemous imposture.'"

"I feel, Monica, fully the force of such argument" replied the Bishop, "and this is the age, and now is the time to investigate the historical evidence, but, alas, Monica, nearly all the writings since the death of Jesus are destroyed. We have those written before His time, but only a few of the outside writings since His death."

"And how is this?" inquired Monica. "Are Constantine and the bishops afraid to produce these writings?" If suppressed now, after-ages can never supply the missing link. Age mellows religion as well as wine, and both become more intoxicating the longer they are kept."

"I thank you, Monica, for the expression of your views," replied the Bishop. "When I reach the Roman world I will devote myself to this great search, and look

for evidences for the resurrection of the Christ. This is the only sign He promised of His Divinity. This is our only hope, our only trust. Take this away, and Christianity is indeed idolatry."

## CHAPTER XVI.

AMBITION INTERFERES WITH LOVE. — THE HORRORS OF SECRET ORDERS.

We will leave Marcel and Orlando and his men while they are inquiring into the fate of the Princess and the others, and return to Savelona.

The Duke had no sooner said adieu to Marcel and friends before he felt a strong desire to have an interview with the Queen. He repaired to the usual trysting-place, the palace gardens, and there took up his place in the summer-house, and awaited the coming of her he loved so deeply.

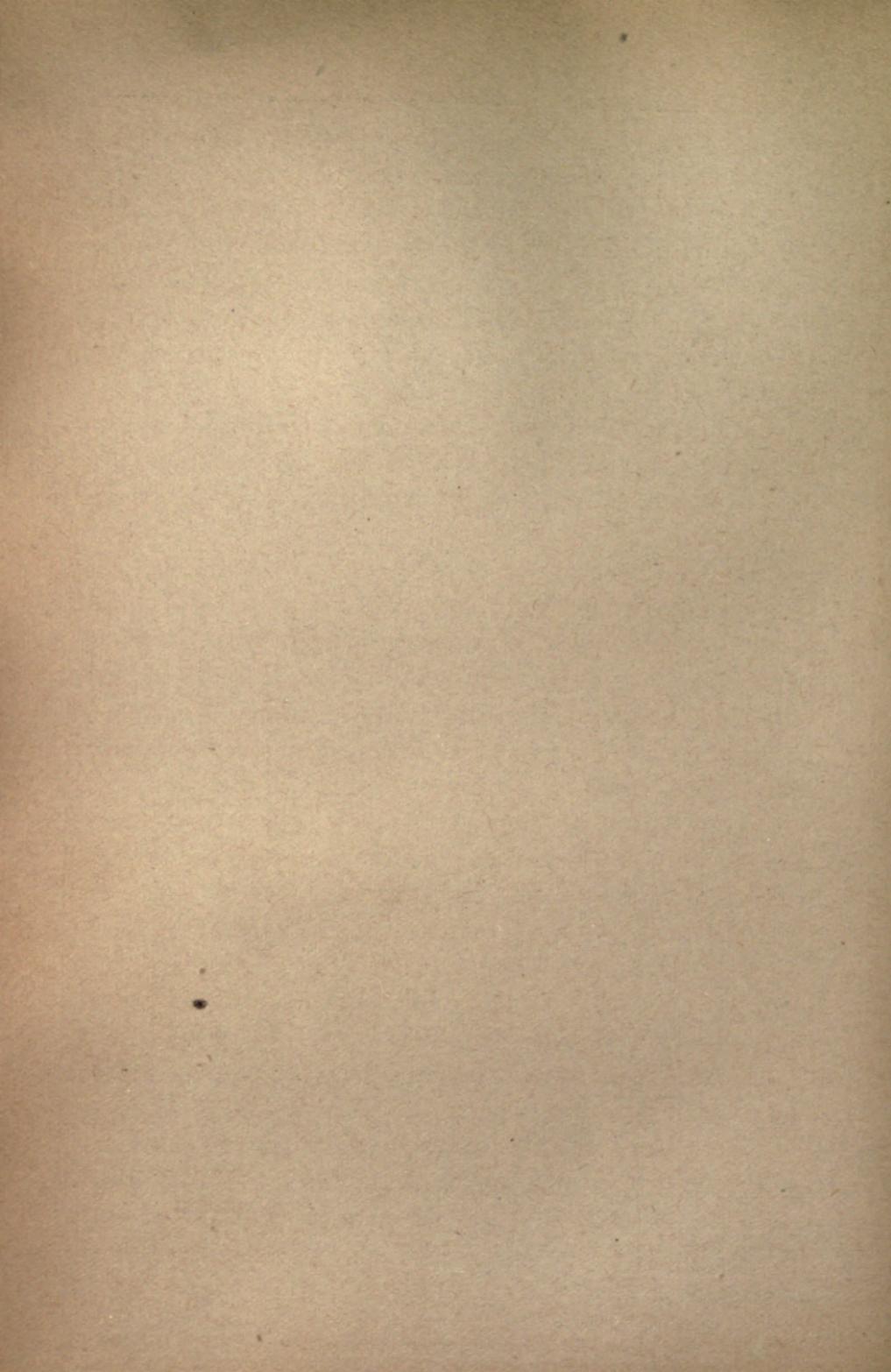
He looked out upon the flowers, inhaled their sweetness and admired their beauty. He listened to the singing of the birds and the hum of insect life, and watched the bees moving from flower to flower, gathering honey for the winter's store. The soft breeze moved gently the leaves as it breathed through the trees, and the fleecy clouds were borne slowly through the sky, and all nature spoke to him who was in harmony with the spring morning, and his pulse throbbed with the sanguine anticipations of love and youth.

True, there were clouds over the horizon of his hopes, and all did not appear rose-colored in the future, but he had the love of one of Heaven's fairest daughters, and he was waiting for her to shed increased beauty over the scene.

And she came, stepping lightly and alone, from the entrance to the palace. She tripped along gaily and her heart responded to the morning's beauty, and as she approached the trysting-place young love gave her face a rosy hue, and the Duke gazed upon her as one entranced,



"NOW LET US SEE WHAT THIS LOVE-SICK MAIDEN SAYS TO HER DARK  
LOVER." See p. 283.



and neither saw the dark shadow of a man who walked behind and kept the Queen in sight.

“My love, my dear Costanza,” said the Duke, taking her lovingly in his arms, “how can I thank you for coming to me to-day. My friends have gone to visit Serapta, but I could not tear myself from this enchanted spot. Oh, when shall I be able to call you my very own, Costanza ?”

And he kissed her fondly, and she, having given him her heart’s warmest love, was not coy of his embraces. Yet, at this question, a slight cloud came over her open, joyous face.

“Bismantua, my love, my dearest, would that I were fully free and you should not ask in vain. Yet I hope soon to see my way to give you a decided answer. When King Pinto returns to his own kingdom I will see my father and acquaint him how matters stand between us. He used to love his little Costanza, and if we are alone I think I can obtain his consent.”

“But if not,” said the Duke, “you will either assert your queenly power and decide for yourself, or else go with me to my own land, where, in peaceful seclusion from the cares of State, we can enjoy our lives together.”

“Rest satisfied my love,” said the Queen, raising her beautiful eyes to the Duke, “that I shall ever be yours. Such love as ours can never fade, or die, or change.”

And the lovers seated themselves amidst the roses, and took in their sweet perfume, and looked out upon the lovely scene, and nature sang to them one of her sweetest airs, and heart to heart and hand in hand they lived but in the moment as it passed them by, and thought no evil.

But there was one near who watched and listened, and, as the young lovers left the summer-house together, he glided noiselessly away."

"Ah, I thought this was how matters stood," said Caius Pompora, the young Roman gallant and adventurer, who had pushed himself into the party with Marcel in quest of Benoni and Serapta. "This accounts for the Queen's coolness in receiving my approaches. I thought there was some nonsense between these two, for I noticed how the Queen's color heightened when the Duke approached her unannounced. But I will put a spoke in their wheel. King Pinto will be glad to hear how matters stand so that he may push this Parsee Duke from his path as he would brush an insect from him. And I dare not return to Constantinople unless I make treasure to pay my debts. Shall I first approach the King or Spenata? Both are interested in the news I can tell them."

Thus he mused as he walked slowly through the lovely grounds. He saw not the beauty of the scene, nor heard the heavenly music which nature made, nor drank in the refreshing breeze, nor the perfume of the flowers. All these, to his cunning soul, were as though they existed not. Alas, thus it is with the dull, heavy minds that live for earth alone and the gratification of their own vile passions.

Circumstances appear to decide for him, for just as he was turning into the palace, King Pinto walked forth alone.

"Well, Caius," said the King, "what enchantment has drawn you to this solitary ramble in the palace gardens? Do you come to meditate upon the fair being you

have left behind in Constantinople, or are you looking around for a love of a darker shade to settle near us here?"

"Love is not for me, most noble King," softly replied the young deceiver. "I would rather win renown in the battle-field. But, in my morning ramble, I have been entertained by a touching love scene, and listened to words of fond endearment. Your Highness, however, would not care to hear of such trifling matters. You are wedded to your kingdom and to renown in war."

"The Kingdom and affairs of State are important to me," replied the King, "and the glory and renown of war is pleasant to my ear. Yet if thou hast seen any dalliance with the maids of honor or some of the court ladies and the young gallants, I will hear thy account. Perhaps I can have a joke with some of them, for I am not above a harmless jest, and love to see the women's confusion, and the embarrassment of the men."

"It is none of these, your Majesty," replied Caius, watching closely the royal face. "The episode was with one of whom I hesitate to speak unless your Majesty receives my communication in confidence."

"Pray speak, Caius," said the King. "The conversation between us shall be as thou desirest."

"It relates to the Queen," replied Caius, "and as your Majesty is her guest perhaps you would rather I kept silence. But it shall be as your Majesty may decide."

"Whatever relates to the Queen I want to hear," replied the King. "Proceed."

Thus desired, Caius narrated what he had seen and heard; and the brow of the King grew dark with rage, and, putting his hand on his sword, he was rushing out, exclaiming:

"This vile Parsee shall live no longer. I will kill him."

But as King Pinto hurried away he was met by Spenata.

"Whither goest thou, King Pinto, in this hot haste?" said the Archbishop. "What has offended thee?"

The King turned furiously upon Spenata, saying:

"I have been fooled in this palace. The Queen is in dalliance with that hateful Parsee, and I go to kill him."

"Not so fast," replied Spenata. "There are more ways of disposing of him without soiling your hands with open murder. Kings can kill, themselves unseen."

"Not thus would I slay," fiercely said Pinto. "He should know the hand that struck him down. Let me go, now my blood is up. I would not slay him in cold blood."

"Nay, King Pinto," warily said the Archbishop, "be advised. Let me hear in what respect he has offended, and if he merits instant death I will not stand in the way. I have no love for him myself."

"Ask the soldier to narrate what he has seen and heard," replied the King. "And if you have in any way connived at this result I will return at once to Sepania and raise such a force as shall quickly give me full revenge."

"At present, King Pinto," said Spenata, "you are our guest, and such language can only be excused because I see you are heated with anger. Caius, let me hear what has produced this storm."

Again the Roman detailed all he had seen and heard, and the brow of the Archbishop also became dark with rage, but his cunning brain worked out a more deadly revenge than the King's hasty wrath.

Spenata concealed his feelings well, and as Caius completed his narration, the Archbishop approached, and hastily taking from his girdle a strong cord threw it over the young soldier and bound him securely from behind.

"Thou must be lying, caitiff," said Spenata. "We will test thy truth. Hast thou any witness?"

"No one was near but myself," replied Caius.

"Why didst thou not come to me," said the Archbishop, "and tell thy story?" A parent is the proper repository for whatever concerns a child."

"I was coming to your grace," replied the Roman. "But meeting the King suddenly I thought no harm to mention what I had seen."

The Archbishop stamped hastily upon the floor and forth came an attendant.

"Take this prisoner to my private chamber," said Spenata, "and see that he does not escape. I will deal with him by and by."

Then turning to the King, he said:

"I will test the story fully. Methinks the fellow only told your Majesty this tale for his own ends, although how he expects to be the gainer I know not."

"I might have thought slightly of it," replied the King, "but that I have for some days been suspicious that there was some foolery between your daughter and this young upstart. I have seen how she gradually cooled in converse with me and blushed when the fellow has come near us in the grounds and elsewhere, but, hitherto, I had nothing positive to mention to you. Have you given any encouragement to the low-born hind?"

"Certainly not," replied Spenata. "My desire is to

see you united to my daughter. In proof of this I will at once take steps to put the Parsee out of your path. Do nothing yourself, King Pinto. This would set the Queen against the alliance with you."

King Pinto's anger had gradually cooled down and he saw at once the force of the argument, and replied:

"You are right, in part, Spenata. But what is applicable to me applies with equal force to you. Leave the young Parsee at liberty, but have him carefully watched, and this Roman is just the man if rightly used. He must have had some envy himself or hate to report to me what he had seen and heard."

"Think you he has mentioned the matter to any others?" inquired Spenata. "If not, and we keep our own counsel, all will go well."

"I feel assured," replied the King, "that the secret is between ourselves and him alone. But I must away. I expect a courier from my court and may have to return to-day. Am I to understand that you are still desirous of the marriage of your daughter and myself?"

"I am wishful for this," answered the Archbishop, "and nothing but your refusal will prevent. I have no fear of Costanza. She has ever been a dutiful child, and if you have to leave at once I will soon report that she is willing for the match."

"Be it so," said the King. "She is a beautiful woman, and I love her deeply. I leave matters in your hands, but if I leave to-day, arrange that she shall accompany me some distance on the way. I would converse with her alone and urge my suit in person."

"It shall be as you desire. Adieu!"

And these two men parted; the King to dwell upon

the beauty and grace of her he loved and hope against hope that Caius had told him wrongly; while Spenata walked quickly to his private chamber, prepared to deal firmly with the Roman, and act as policy dictated.

“Leave me,” said the Archbishop to the attendant, “but remain within call as I may require you to execute speedy justice.”

Then turning to the Roman, he said:

“I would not judge you without a fair and impartial hearing. Are you a free-mason?”

“Methinks your grace is not or you would not have to ask, but only to test and try me,” replled Caius. “Perhaps your religion is like the new Roman faith—no secret societies allowed except their own.”

“You are right,” replied the Archbishop, looking intently upon the face of Caius as though he would read him to the depths of his mind. “I am not a mason, yet I have a secret order of my own, and if you dare pass through the ordeal I may initiate you. Had you been a mason I should not have thought of this step as they would clash, but I could have had you tested by a masonic meeting. I scarcely thought, however, a mason would stoop to what you have done and play evesdropper.”

And as Spenata uttered these words his lip curled with scorn, but he continued:

“Now are you prepared to be open with me and give me a history of yourself, and the true reasons which induced you to come to this country? But, so that you may converse freely, and to show you that I am not in any way afraid of you, I give you your liberty.”

And thus speaking, Spenata took from his girdle a

dagger as though about to cut the cord, but he did this only to show the Roman that he was fully armed against surprise, and stepping close to Caius unfastened the knot and placed the rope beneath his robe.

The Roman felt greatly relieved at this turn of affairs, and his quick mind saw the opening for a post of profit under Spenata, for he knew that virtually the Archbishop was the ruler of the Kingdom of Savelona.

Caius resolved to be quite open in his communication with the old Priest, and thus replied:

“If I should not weary your grace, I would shortly give a sketch of my life, and that can easily be verified by Marcel or any of his party.”

“You are at liberty to tell me all you think desirable,” replied Spenata. “All I ask is that you tell me nothing but the truth, and your reasons for coming here. Conceal nothing, and you may find a friend instead of an enemy.”

Thus addressed, Caius took a seat some little distance from Spenata, quite at his ease, and with the grace which a true born noble of the Roman Empire only could command, and thus replied:

“I am a nephew of the great Constantine, and from my boyhood have had every luxury and indulgence. When I reached my majority I came into possession of a large fortune. This I squandered and became heavily in debt, so that I had no resource but to flee my country. I was present when Marcel spoke of coming in search of Prince Benoni and the Princess Serapta, and I volunteered to accompany him. I cannot return, and therefore should be prepared to take up some post in this or the adjoining kingdom.”

“And was it with this end in view that you revealed what you had seen to King Pinto? Methinks it was a clumsy way of reaching a position either here or in his Kingdom. But proceed.”

“I had seen that King Pinto was in love with the Queen,” replied Caius, “and I thought that the sooner he put a stop to these secret meetings with the Duke, the better. I chanced to see the King as I turned into the palace, otherwise I was coming to speak to your grace.”

“And your impulsiveness,” said Spenata, “might have spoilt my dearest wishes for the alliance of the two kingdoms and risked your own prospects for promotion here. Have you mentioned what you saw to anyone?”

“No one but the King,” replied Caius, “and will not repeat to anyone if that be your grace’s wish.”

“Now I am inclined to believe you, and what is more to the purpose to trust you. But I shall want something in return.”

The Archbishop then narrated his mode of procedure in obtaining the sanction of the Queen to the royal marriage, and continued:

“The workman is worthy of his hire, and you will find me able and willing to pay well for ability and zeal in my service. I cannot openly offer you any post and you will appear to rest under my displeasure until after the marriage of the Queen with King Pinto. That accomplished I will find you something worthy of acceptance. But, so as to insure your faithfulness, you must be initiated into my secret order. Are you prepared to undergo this ordeal?”

"If it is nothing that a soldier and Roman should not do," said Caius, "I am prepared."

Spenata looked with a sneer curling his sarcastic lips, as he replied:

"You may leave these high-flown expressions for the outside world. They are not in keeping with what you are prepared to do, and I object to cant in private."

Thereupon, the Archbishop whistled down a reed which communicated with the adjoining chamber, and a powerful man, dressed as a soldier, answered the call.

"Janus, prepare the chamber of horrors for the initiation of a candidate for our Holy Secret Order. Inform the three prisoners that their hour has come, and have all ready forthwith. Heat well the branding-iron, and summon a secret committee. Make all speed."

The soldier bowed and withdrew, and, Spenata, turning to the Roman, continued:

"It will be necessary for you to give up your sword and arms and be blindfolded. As I desire myself to test your sincerity I will accompany you. This I rarely do, but the importance of the occasion requires that you be fully initiated, and I trust the interest I take in you will be appreciated."

Caius, making a virtue of necessity, and readily divining the opportunity when presented, gave up his sword and dagger, and offered himself to be blindfolded.

This Spenata did at once; then fastening the door of communication said through a speaking tube, formed of reeds closely joined together:

"Let no one approach my chamber. I am going to another part of the palace to try this prisoner."

Spenata took the young Roman by the arm and led

him forth through an opening, further into the palace. The way had many turnings, and having proceeded some distance, the Archbishop touched a concealed spring and a door flew open. This led into a cage, with a seat at the further side. As soon as both were seated the cage began slowly to descend. Spenata again took the arm of the Roman, and simply uttering the word "wait," the two men walked along some further passages, and again Spenata turned a knob and another cage was discovered.

Into this both men entered, and were slowly lowered deeper into the earth.

When it stopped, Spenata assisted Caius out of the cage, and the entrance door slowly closed, and both walked some little distance away.

"You are now in the initiation room," said the Archbishop, "and I will remove the scarf from your eyes."

He did so, and the Roman found himself in total darkness.

"Speak low," said Spenata, "for here we are amongst the dead and dying."

As he thus spoke there was an unearthly howl which appeared to proceed from a lion close to them. In fact, Caius could feel the monster's breath on his cheek; and directly afterwards he heard a screech of intense pain, & the lion was heard munching into human flesh.

"Thus die," said Spenata, "those who betray the secrets of this holy order."

As Caius became more accustomed to the darkness, he could see faintly the outlines of the lion, and especially its glaring eyes, and he felt his blood run chill and hoped yearningly for the light.

This came in a different way to what the Roman ex-

pected. There were sounds of heavy thunder and then the lightning flashed forth, forked, as though it would strike both onlookers with death.

"At the next flash," said Spenata, still speaking in a low voice, "look near you to your right. There you will see another victim who betrayed the mission the order intrusted to him. Keep your eyes in that direction and about your own height. When you see the lightning form a circle, it will be around the head of the traitor, and that means instantaneous death."

Spenata had scarcely ceased to speak ere a vivid flash came direct to the point named and lit up the livid face of a man encircled in fire, and a deep voice sounded through the darkness:

"Thus perish all traitors to our holy order!"

Then, from the domed roof of the room there shone a powerful light and showed Caius the lion and a few crunched bones just before him, and to his right a man, quite dead, fastened to a post.

"There are yet two more victims," said Spenata, "but they will come in alone. The first is a woman who failed in her duty to the order, and was also unfaithful to her husband who stood high as one of the directors of this order. Both she and the guilty man will suffer. See you a form at the far end of the cage? They have closed the door and she sinks upon the ground."

The light went out and the pair were in darkness again; but they heard the spring of the lion, and a dreadful scream announced that it had found the victim.

Again the voice said in deep tones:

"Thus die unfaithful wives, and betrayers of our secret order."

A few moments elapsed, and then there was the sound of horses hoofs, and the light was gradually increased from the roof, and Caius saw eight horses standing in a circle and facing eight points of the compass.

Strapped on the backs of the horses, by the arms, legs and head, was a man of beautiful form and naked. At the crack of a whip the horses started, each proceeding in a straight line, and each bearing away a portion of the human form. And as a second and third crack of the whip was heard, the horses ran round the circle, and portions of the man's body fell with a thud on the ground, and the head rolled close to Caius.

The young soldier shuddered, and to add to the horror, the lights again went out, and the same voice was heard uttering the same solemn words.

Spenata took the young man by the arm and led him into another opening which could just be seen near them. Again the men stood in a cage which slowly descended between the masonry. When they left this means of communication it was to proceed to another directly under the floor where they had been standing. It was a large and wild-looking place, and at the further end there was a huge fire, with some nearly naked figures surrounding it, and heaping thereon huge fagots of wood.

"This," said Spenata, "is the initiation room, and here is completed the ceremony admitting to the secrets of the order. Are you prepared to go forward with the ordeal?"

The young soldier stated that he was ready to become a member as he presumed his grace had already been admitted.

"I formed the order," said Spenata, "and did it for

State purposes. By means of this order I know everything that takes place in the kingdom, and it was the main cause of my being able to place my daughters on the throne and keep them there. Through information furnished to me, I have no doubt that your statement respecting the Queen and Duke is correct, and I expected such a scene as you witnessed."

"Why then," inquired Caius, "did you express surprise when I related to you what I saw?"

"That was simply a stroke of State policy," replied Spenata. "It was necessary to throw dust in the eyes of the King of Sepania, and to gain time to work out my plans."

By this time the pair had reached near the end of the room. They found a large table with a dark covering on it, on which was painted a skull, bones, and various instruments of a deadly kind.

Around the table sat twelve men, wearing masks, also bearing the impression of a skull and cross-bones.

The Archbishop led Caius to a seat at the foot of the table, while Spenata took a chair at the head, and thus spoke:

"Directors of our Holy Order of Ancient Druids, I present before you Caius Pompora, nephew of the Emperor Constantine, of Constantinople, a candidate for admission to our secret society. I have been with him during the exhibition of your vengeance on the betrayers of our secrets and the violators of our honor and trust; and I have since asked of him if he is prepared to proceed with the ordeal, and to this he has assented. I now leave him in your hands to be examined and tested, and, if found eligible, completely initiated."

Thus saying, the Archbishop vacated the chair and went into a small room leading past the large fire, and another took his place.

"His grace, the Archbishop of Savelona," said the new chairman, looking toward Caius, "has left you in our hands, pursuant to a rule in our holy order, that no one introducing a candidate shall take any further part in the examination and initiation. And, although his retirement was scarcely necessary, it shows the delicacy of feeling that pervades our ranks, and that even our founder and grand master is here as a brother only and conforms strictly to the rules of the order. I will now appoint a committee to examine you in private and you will then return to declare your decision."

Hereupon the presiding director appointed three of the party to go through the examination and explanation necessary before the final question was put to him as to initiation.

They took Caius to another room, which was draped in black, and had human skulls scattered here and there, and instruments of torture and death of many frightful kinds.

It was duly explained to him that every one admitted to the order must take a solemn oath never to divulge the secrets of the community, nor wrong a brother, nor a brother's wife, but always defend and assist the same under all circumstances, and carry out strictly and faithfully all orders imposed by the General Councils or the Grand Master; and that a violation of this oath would render the member liable to such violent or other death as the Council or Grand Master might direct.

Caius expressed his readiness to take the oath and abide by the rules of the order.

The committee then informed him that he would have to receive a brand or distinguishing mark.

To this Caius also assented.

The committee, each taking a silver trumpet, blew a loud blast and the directors and Spenata knew that Caius had passed the ordeal satisfactorily. They returned to the table and Spenata again took the chair and Caius was placed at the foot as before, and the oath was administered. Caius, holding in his right hand, a sprig of oak, and resting his left on a human skull.

After this was completed, the young soldier was marked on each arm, and he was declared a member of the first degree, and the party separated, and it was left for the Archbishop to instruct him in the signs of admission for the first degree.

“You have been admitted, Caius,” said Spenata, “into one of the oldest secret orders of the world. The Freemasons claim their formation from Solomon but we go back to Noah. Ancient history records that after Ham had offended his father and the old man had cursed his son, Shem and Japheth besought their father to form this order, and as they sat together under the oak, he plucked the mistletoe as a sign, and all who are admitted have since had it marked on their arms. By enrollment under this order, the descendants of Shem and Japheth, have been able to bind and oppress the children of Ham, and keep them slaves, as Noah vowed they should remain.”

“How did the people of this kingdom ever consent to be members of such an order?” inquired Caius. “We

look upon the northern Africans as a nation of slaves. Surely this would tend to keep alive the idea, and be objectionable to them."

"I did not reveal the antiquity of the order," replied Spenata. "Neither are these people descendants of Ham, but of Nimrod, the great hunter. And some say that he was in the direct line from Cain, the slayer of his brother."

"I have always felt that murder to have been one of the most dreadful," said Caius. "Fancy the first picture of death on earth was the dead body of Abel. And why was he killed? Surely, for an idea only."

"You are right, Caius," said the Archbishop. "The first murder was on account of religion, and since that time the most revolting cruelty has been for the same cause. Man, in his folly, has imagined vain things and murdered those who have ventured to oppose his imagination. Are the Roman Christians an exception to this rule?"

"No replied Caius, "for now they have got the upper hand they are as revengeful as any of the other religions. Before Christianity was made the religion of the State they were meek and harmless, and followed in the footsteps of their founder, but now they persecute all who venture to have different opinions to themselves."

"I thought that was so," said the Archbishop, "although Angelus spoke so eloquently of love and universal peace and forgiveness. I fancied human nature would remain the same so long as people were governed by the emotions, and not by the intellect."

"That," replied Caius, "is the great fault of all the religions of the earth. They seek to make men perfect

through their emotional nature, but truth is gained by research alone."

"Truth! What is truth?" inquired Spenata. "This has been the search of mankind from the dawn of history, and each generation, as it struts through its little life, asserts that it has found it and acts accordingly. Yet succeeding ages wipe out this truth and write afresh. But in the interval what anguish and pain are caused. Oh, that men would not be such fools but calmly work and wait."

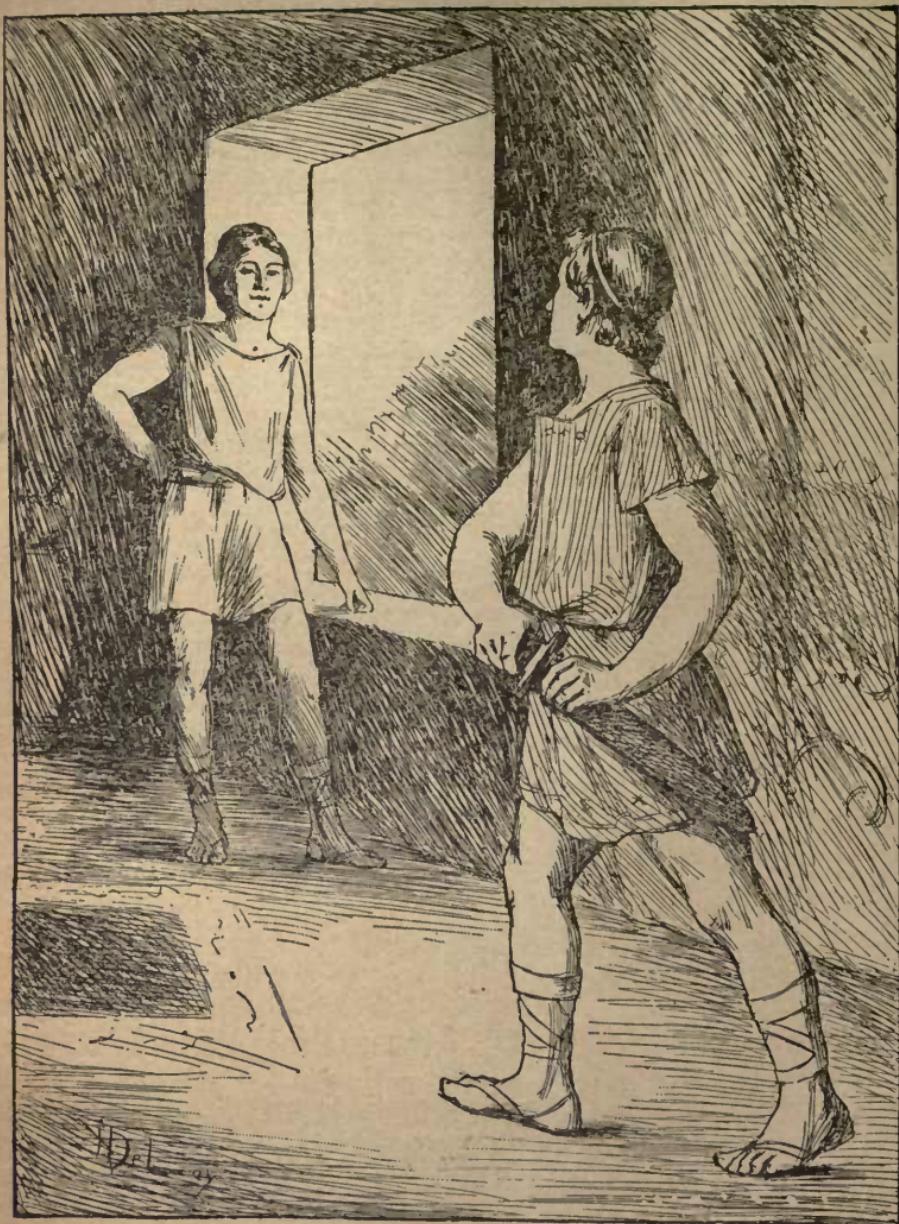
"Life is too short to do much," replied the young soldier. "We only begin to think and investigate ere we are called away. Then our descendants have to begin afresh. Thus it is that all is new and all is old."

And as Caius uttered these words a deep sigh escaped him as he thought upon the vanity of man's attempts to reach the mind and purposes of the Infinite.

"I would know more of you," said the Archbishop. "I find that, contrary to my first impression, you have thought on these great subjects." Then pointing out the way, Spenata continued: "You take the left while I proceed to the right. I have some State affairs to attend to to-day."

Thus parted these men so strangely thrown together, each to work out his little play in life's mimic battlefield, writing they knew not what.





"THOU LIEST, CAIUS, AND I AM HALF DISPOSED TO PUNISH THEE FOR THINE  
SLANDER ON THE QUEEN." See p. 273.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A DARK PLOT TO BETRAY THE LOVERS.

The following day opened with a sky of beautiful blue. The soft wind moved gently through the trees, and the air was clear, shewing the landscape for many miles around the city of Savelona.

On the western terrace of the palace walked the King and Queen, and as they strolled together, the King looked with loving eyes upon Costanza.

“Noble Queen,” he said, “my visit is nearly ended. I must away to-day to my kingdom, but I shall ever dwell upon the happy days I have passed with you here. May I hope that you will cherish one thought of me?”

“I am glad.” replied the Queen, “that your visit has been agreeable and that you will recall the days you have passed with us. I fear I have been but dull company. The sudden absence of my sister has brought a cloud over my happy life. Alas, would she were here to entertain you more royally.”

And as the Queen spoke a sadness came over her beauteous face and there was a far-off look towards the palace of Sordello and the distant sea.

“Whatever causes your grief, noble Queen, I feel and regret. But even when your sister was here my heart turned yearningly to you. May I hope, Costanza, that at some early day the wish of my heart may be answered and that I may claim you as my bride?”

The Queen felt her heart quicken its pulsations. She had hoped that this trying ordeal might be spared to her. She blushed deeply, and then a faintness came over her, and she said in a low voice:

"Ask me not, noble King, for my heart is not my own. I am faint. Oh, lead me to my room."

And he, seeing how pale she was and fearing she would fall, took her in his arms, and bore her into the palace.

Unobserved, Caius Pompora, had just entered on the terrace and saw the King as he took her in his arms and bore her away.

"The plot thickens," mused Caius. "Yesterday I saw the Queen in the arms of the Duke and to-day I find her in the embraces of King Pinto. Which is the favored one?"

Again he was the messenger of tidings to Spenata and recounted what he had seen.

"And did you hear what passed between my daughter and the King?" inquired the Archbishop.

"As I reached the top of the terrace," replied the young Roman, "I saw the King embrace the Queen and she had her head on his shoulder and they proceeded to the palace."

"I am glad," said Spenata, "for this alliance between the two kingdoms has been my strongest desire. Thus united they would found an empire equal to Rome, and I should have been the cause."

And the eyes of the old man glowed with pleased ambition. He had lived in the Roman Empire and realized its power.

"And why should not the name of Spenata be handed down to posterity as the founder of a mighty kingdom?" mused the aged priest, aloud. "I have been successful in changing the religion and in placing my children on the throne, why should I not increase their power, and

establish a new faith here that shall last for ages, nay, perhaps forever?"

"The name of Constantine," replied Caius, taking up the thought, "shall live as long as Rome shall live. Nay, when her temporal power has gone her spiritual dominion shall increase. And so in Savelona and this great Continent, the Archbishop, Spenata, shall be heard of for ages as the founder of a more spiritual faith and a greater empire."

Thus the flatterer responded to the musings of the Priest, and Spenata listened and believed it possible.

Hereupon an attendant appeared and whispered to the Archbishop, and Spenata abruptly broke up the interview.

"The King of Sepania desires to see your grace," said the messenger. "Will you attend him in his rooms, or shall he come to you?"

"I will accompany you," said the Priest, and he followed the attendant to the King's apartment.

"I have desired to see you, Spenata," said the King, "for I have just had an interview with your daughter. I could not wait until the evening to speak to her. My heart beats too ardently to admit of the slow calculations of prudence. But I am no nearer arriving at certainty. The few words she said implied a prior attachment, and yet it might refer to her love for you. And when she had uttered them she fainted in my arms, and I have borne her to her rooms and left her in charge of the maids. Will you direct your physician to attend her at once."

"That I will, King Pinto," replied Spenata, "and methinks it would be well to delay pressing the matter further for the present. I will take charge of her en-

tirely and report you to your kingdom if you must leave today."

"It is imperative that I return this day," answered the King. "But if the Queen recovers, perhaps you can all ride with me as far as the Gardens of Sordello. I would wander again through those enchanted grounds, and if Costanza could be my companion all might yet be as we wish."

The Archbishop replied that it should be as the King desired, and he sought the court physician.

"Huesca," said Spenata, addressing the head of the healing art of Savelona. "I want you to see the Queen. She has fainted on the terrace as King Pinto and she were conversing. It is a sudden affection of the heart. Apply your healing remedies and restore my daughter quickly to-day, as I desire her to proceed to Sordello for change of air and quiet."

"I will hasten to the Queen and do all in my power to restore her speedily. Has your grace any further commands?" inquired Huesca.

"I shall require you to proceed to-day to Sordello," replied the Archbishop "so as to attend upon and watch over your patient. I will give you further instructions there, as I shall accompany the King that far."

The aged physician bowed and withdrew to attend upon the Queen. He found her reclining upon a couch, and her long hair lay heedlessly around her. She was deathly pale, and the maids of honor were bathing her temples.

"That is right," said the physician. "We will soon have her Majesty well again."

And thereupon he made a careful examination of the Queen's ailment.

"Your Majesty has had some great excitement," said Huesca. "I have here a potion that will impart strength and energy. Give the Queen a goblet, and I will pour it out for her to take at once."

And the physician, taking from his mantle a small bottle, poured its contents into a drinking-cup handed to him. The effect was quickly perceptible, and the color came again to the pale cheek and lustre to the dull eye.

The Queen looked gratefully upon the physician, and thanking him, said:

"Your medicine is indeed acceptable. It has already given me renewed life. Yours, noble doctor, is a glorious career, and I would many poor suffering ones in my kingdom could receive of your healing art."

"Knowing the kindness of your Majesty's heart I often ease the illness of your people. They are grateful, and your Majesty pays me well."

At this moment a messenger announced the Archbishop. Spenata followed in the footsteps of the attendant, and approaching the Queen took her hand, saying:

"Hearing of your faintness I sent this good physician, and I see he has already restored the bloom to your cheek and lustre to your eyes. I trust, Costanza, that you will be able to accompany me to Sordello. The King desires to see again the gardens on his way to Sepania, and he must leave Savelona to-day. Huesca shall go with us to be near you in case of need."

The Queen feebly expressed a desire to be left behind at Savelona, but the Archbishop overruled her request, saying:

“We must speed the departing guest. King Pinto has spoken of your courtesy and kindness during his stay and expressed a wish for us to accompany him to Sordello. We must not disappoint him on this last day of his visit, and every care shall be taken of you, Costanza. Therefore let your maids assist you to be ready shortly when the King will call for you to lead you to his chariot.”

The Queen felt herself in the toils and saw no way of escape without disclosing to her father her feelings for the Duke, and this communication she desired to delay until the King’s visit was over.

“If it must be, father, I will be ready to accompany you to Sordello as you and King Pinto desire. But, when his Majesty has left us there, I desire to confer with you, dear father, on something important to your little Costanza.”

“So it shall be,” replied the Archbishop, “and you arrange to make a short stay there as change and quiet will do you good. Adieu for the present.”

And Spenata kissed his daughter, for her helplessness had recalled the years when, as a little one, she had placed her arms around his neck and comforted him.

If the Queen could then have told him of the Duke his heart might have been responsive; but as he turned away he came in contact with King Pinto, and allowed his mind to dwell on the old ideas of an union of the two kingdoms, his mood changed, and he muttered:

“Pshaw, why allow a love-sick maiden to interfere with my cherished plans! King Pinto will make her a truly gallant husband. True, he is somewhat her senior, and she may have allowed her romantic tenden-

cies to wander to this Parsee, but what is love weighed against ambition."

Thus the yielding moment passed and a few hours found a royal conclave proceeding to Sordello, the King and Queen conspicuous in their midst in the royal chariot.

As the Queen looked up to one of the casements of a mansion on their route she saw the sad and reproachful face of the Duke gazing down upon her, and the smiling features of Caius Pompora bearing him company.

She blushed scarlet, and her eyes sought the ground in maiden bashfulness. She never dreamed of jealousy taking possession of the Duke's mind. She had given him her young heart's love and doubted not, nor feared any misunderstanding. But she knew not the depths of man's heart, nor how easily the best of men can fall into a jealous trap well laid.

"This appears a settled matter, Bismantua," said Caius, "and perhaps the marriage will come off at Sordello and the Queen accompany King Pinto to Sepania."

"What mean you, Caius," angrily inquired the Duke. "There is no foundation for such a statement."

"Is there not, my lord Duke?" said Pompora. "If you had seen the Queen in the arms of King Pinto this morning as I did, you would think it was time the marriage took place."

"Thou liest, Caius," angrily replied the young Parsee, "and I am half disposed to punish thee for this slander on the Queen."

And the Duke placed his hand on his sword, but his companion only laughed, as he said:

"Whatever can it matter to you, my lord Duke, what the Queen may do? You are neither her lover nor her

subject, but only a visitor for a short time in her realm."

The Duke saw that he had betrayed himself somewhat to Caius, and desirous of ascertaining more continued:

"I saw the Queen yesterday but she said nothing of this journey to Sordello. It must have been a sudden idea acted upon in haste. Know you ought further?"

"One of the maids of honor told me," answered Caius, "that soon after the King had escorted his lady-love to her chamber, her father came, and was very loving to her and kind to her, and kissed her, which is a thing of rare occurrence. Then they conversed in a low tone, and the next thing announced was to prepare for Sordello, and the King came shortly and led her to the chariot. The palace is full of the news. Where have you been all morning, my lord, not to have heard the reports going about this matter? Depend upon it that it means an union of the two kingdoms by the marriage of the King and Queen."

"I was anxious about the Princess Serapta," replied the Duke, "and came out as far as this to see if I could learn any tidings of her and our friends. I somewhat regret that I did not accompany Marcel and his party on their adventure in her behalf."

"Ah," said Caius, sharply, for he had not been let into the particulars of the secret journey of Marcel. "Where is the Princess, and what steps are being taken on her behalf?"

This was news to the Duke who assumed that Caius would have been invited by Marcel to take part in the proposed rescue, and, therefore, the young Parsee replied:

"I presumed Marcel had informed you that they were

about to do something to aid the Princess. You had better apply to him whenever you meet as he has charge of this expedition."

Caius was not well pleased to receive this answer, but as he had something to gain by keeping good friends with the Duke, he laughed the matter off, and said:

"Depend upon it, Marcel wants all the honor to himself. But are you going to wait here until they return? I proceed to Sordello. I ought to have been invited as a visitor from Rome, but they have left the road behind them. What say you, will you accompany me to join in the fun? Depend upon it, we shall see a jolly wedding if we start at once."

This suggestion fell in so well with the Duke's thoughts that he readily assented, and Caius hastened to provide a chariot, with two quick-trotting steeds, and the young men were soon following in the track of the royal party.

They, however, kept well in the rear and arrived at Sordello after the King and Queen reached the gardens.

"Shall we present ourselves for admission to the palace?" inquired Caius, who was ever ready to present himself anywhere and on any pretense that his wild fancy suggested. "As visitors from the Roman Empire we are entitled to be received."

"We will take up our abode at some inn just outside the palace," replied the Duke. "We shall then have early intimation of all that stirs."

A deep sadness came over the Parsee. His memory recalled the pair, so near together in the royal chariot. This, coupled with the communication of the young

Roman, planted the first doubts in the mind of the Duke.

"And yet," he mused, "how sweetly she gave me her hand and returned my betrothal kiss. Costanza, I cannot deem thee false to love and me."

And as the young men retired for the night, under the Duke's apartment a voice was heard singing sweetly:

"Away, dark doubt, let love be free  
As the clear air of heaven."

"Who sings there?" asked the Duke, leaning from his window and peering out into the darkness below.

"A friend to thee, and her of whom thou thinkest now," was the reply, also spoken in low tones.

"Ah, there is but one of whom I muse, but she thinks not now of me. She has listened to other words and other love, and received embraces from another."

"Thou hast been wrongly informed," answered the voice from the darkness, "Come to the masque tomorrow night and thou wilt see her of whom thou thinkest. She will wear on her right arm the picture of the sun rising in the east to dispel the powers of darkness from the earth. And do thou wear around thy turban this scarf which I hand to thee."

And as she spoke she threw a package from her, for it was a woman who had thus spoken to the Duke, and hastened away, while from the corner turned the sentinel and exclaimed, "Who goest there?"

"Good sentinel," said the Duke, "reach me the package which has dropped from this balcony near thy beat."

"I see no package," answered the sentinel, searching around. "The darkness is too great. Why didst thou

drop it here? It must now await the morning light to find it."

"I will come down and look myself," replied the Duke.

"Thou must not do so. The gates of the inn are barred and locked fast, and no one can quit their rooms until the morning sun breaks through the east. These are the rules and customs of Sordello. Go thou to rest and if the package is there at all, which much I doubt, thou shalt have it when the morning breaks. May sleep attend thee."

And with this parting salute, the sentinel resumed his weary walk, and all was still. Not a sound broke the solitude, except the gentle murmur of the waves washing the seashore, and the soft rustle of the leaves, stirred by the breeze.

"Who art thou, fair spirit, that gives me hope?" mused the Duke, leaning upon the casement of the window to take in the soft wind as it blew coolly on his heated brow. "A friend! Aye, truly a friend to visit me when the hour is the darkest. And could I doubt thee, Costanza? Love shall be free as air, and I will trust thee through all."

And thus young love revived, and hope and trust ousted jealousy, and the Duke lay down and slept, dreaming of the fair one so dear to him.

But he was not the only listener. Beneath the balcony was one who drank in the sentiments of the song and stored up the hints thrown out and possessed himself of the packet intended for the Duke. He, too, mused from his room below and left open his casement to be on the watch for further tidings.

“ ‘ There’s many a slip between the cup and the lip,’ my lord Duke,” mused Caius. “ The dark night is my friend, fair songstress, and I am here to give a counter-move to thy interference with State affairs. How I should have dearly loved to pinion thy fair arms and be thy father confessor, my sweet night wanderer. The Queen, hearing the Duke was here, has commissioned the new court singer to convey this message to her lover. I will communicate with Spenata, and between us we can circumvent this little lovers’ plot.”

And while the Duke slept, Pompura revolved in his cunning brain the best means to accomplish his villiany.

“ Ah, I have it,” and thus saying he laid him down and slept.

But Caius was moving early, and completing his toilet without delay, sallied forth to hear the news.

“ The Duke, however, had been in advance, searching for the packet, but was returning to the inn with sadness, for he found it not.

“ Well, my lord Duke,” said Caius, “ whither away so soon? Methinks the air of fair Sordello agrees not with your grace. Cheer up, man, love’s sun will shine ere many days are oe’r, and all will go merry as a marriage bell.”

“ I envy thee, Caius, thy merry mood,” said the Duke. Nothing damps thy buoyant temperament. But thou hast never known what it is to love.”

“ How knowest thou that, my lord Duke?” replied the young soldier. “ I may have got over the disease, for perhaps I had the complaint early and in a mild form. But you of the eastern tribes are ever violent in your passions. You love strong and hate stronger, and if de-

ceived seek instant revenge. Is it not so? What then shall become of him who has sent this dark cloud across your brow? I would not be her."

The cutting sarcasm of Pompora's tones raised the stern anger of the Duke, and revived the doubts dropped into his mind by Caius.

"But I must away and learn tidings of the court gaiety to-day."

Thus saying, Caius walked hastily away, while the Duke returned for another search, and as he looked around the sentinel accosted him:

"Was it you, my lord, who was being serenaded last night? For as I took my rounds I heard sweet singing such as is rarely heard except when Plenena, the Court singer, is in these parts."

"Plenena is no longer in the court," sorrowfully replied the Duke. "Some idle chatterer poisoned the mind of Spenata against her, and she and her husband, Harlez, have ceased to be in the service of the Queen. But I have been searching for a packet dropped from the balcony. Hast thou seen ought of it? If so, give it me for its loss troubles me greatly."

"I searched at early light," replied the sentinel, "but found no packet. Possibly the songstress bore it away. No doubt you intended it for her. Ah, you young gallants, what sins you have to answer for."

And the sentinel went whistling away, and the sins he named lay lightly upon him.

"Alas, poor human nature," mused the Duke, "how mockingly are deep mysteries spoken of. These sins, looked upon as so trifling, strike at the Creator's most glorious handiwork and undermine the purity of life and

thought. When will mankind work with the Creator, and purify the world from the gross sin of immorality? Marvellous power is given to us and we each in turn become sub-creators. Glorious Architect of the Universe," continued the Duke, as the sun's rays shone higher and higher in the heavens, "how marvellous are Thy ways. How Thou hast so finely marked out our course and set metes and bounds we cannot pass."

But Caius returned, singing snatches of a gay song, for he was in a joyous mood, expecting the frolic of a carnival.

"Arouse you, my lord Duke," said the young man, "and cease your musings and thinkings in the dark. There are to be jolly times at the palace to-day. The King has consented to prolong his stay another day and night. We are to have feats of archery, and sword plays, and rowing on the water, and at night a masked ball. You must look around early and secure a fitting disguise. And here," producing a packet, secured and sealed with the Queen's seal, "is a royal invitation, or else a masonic apron, or some other well known signal, and addressed to you."

And as Caius ceased to speak he handed the Duke a package, perfumed with the scent which the Queen loved so well, and bearing every sign of coming from Costanza.

The Duke looked with fondness on the package and pressed it to his lips as he turned to open it.

Then taking off the cover, found a scarf enclosed, and a few words hastily penned, and these he read aloud:

"Come to the masked ball and wear the scarf around your turban. Fear not, all will be well."

"How came this packet to your hands?" inquired the Duke.

"I found it near my casement window," replied Caius, "and observing that it was addressed to you, my lord Duke, I hastened to bring it to you. Shall you go to the ball to-night? And can I, too, get an invite?"

"I shall certainly go," replied the Duke, "for here is a royal pass;" and he produced a small tablet with the words, "Pass the bearer," thereon, signed by the Queen's chamberlain. "But," the Duke continued, "whether I can obtain a pass for you, Caius, or not, I cannot say. Yet if I can get speech of the Queen I doubt not I can do so."

"If not," said Caius, "I must put on a little Roman assurance and stalk in as nephew of great Constantine, or, what would be better still, as the veritable Emperor himself."

And the young soldier went away laughing loudly at his own joke. But the Duke gazed fondly on the words he had read and looked long upon the scarf, musing:

"Dearest Costanza, thou art true to me, and again the day is bright and joyous. My love, I am thine forever."

And nature took on for him again a rosy hue, and the clouds of distrust rolled from the horizon, and paradise appeared, and he entered the charmed enclosure, and found the tree of life clothed with the golden apples of hope, and love encircled him in a glorious halo, and his soul was filled with peace and joy.

He saw not the serpent near, and yet the evil one was present, and his voice sounded in the laugh and song of the gay deceiver who had brought the Duke such gladness.

And Caius hastened away, singing as he went. He took a circuitous route through the royal gardens, and coming to a door, in a secluded place facing the sea, he knocked thrice gently, and then twice, and then once only.

A slide opened over the doorway, and a voice said:

“Who seeks entrance here?”

“One duly initiated in the Sacred Order of the Druids,” answered Caius.

“Give the pass-word and sign of the degree to which you have attained,” was the immediate reply.

And Caius passed the ordeal of the order and was duly admitted.

“Whom seekest thou?” inquired the voice within.

“I would have speech with the Grand Master,” replied Caius, “and that without delay. The matter is urgent, and affects the welfare of the State. Inform him I await his orders.”

And here Caius gave the new name in which he was known in the secret order only, and the man who had admitted him took him forward to the private reception room, saying:

“Be seated, and I will bring the Grand Master to you here.”

Caius had not long to wait ere the Archbishop joined him.

“What news?” said Spenata. “Hast thou caught the arrogant Parsee in the toils?”

Hereupon the young Roman recounted the adventures of the night, and especially referred to the songstress as one in the Queen’s employ.

“Yes, I know the singer. She is successor to Plenena.

All these women appear alike, and are in conspiracy together to defeat my plans. But I will defeat them yet."

And a dark scowl passed over the old man's face as he continued:

"Let her beware, or she shall be banished from the court like her predecessor. But let me see the packet intended for the Duke."

And Pompora handed it to Spenata.

"I see thou hast not cut the fastening nor broken the seal. That is well, as it will be the stronger proof against my daughter."

The Archbishop, drawing his dagger, cut the fastenings, but kept the seal intact.

"Now," said Spenata, "let us see what this love-sick maiden says to her dark lover, and the Archbishop read aloud:

"Come to the ball, Bismantua, and wear the scarf I send, around your turban. I will have a sprig of mistletoe in my hair. I long to see you a few moments alone. I send a pass. Farewell.      *"COSTANZA."*

This was all, except a small bunch of sweet blue violets, along with a sprig of mistletoe.

"Truly touching and rural," sneered the Archbishop. "And for this foolery my long cherished plan of uniting the two kingdoms is all to be upset. Never will I sanction such proceedings in my household. But hast thou any plan, Caius? Thou art fertile in invention and just the one to aid me in separating these turtle-doves. Didst thou skillfully repeat the balcony scene between the King and Queen?"

"I did, your grace," replied the Roman, "and you should have seen how the clouds lowered over his brow, and how he plucked at his sword, and stormed and

raved. But my substituted packet has brought renewed sunshine to his hopes, and he is again the languishing lover."

"Truly," said Spenata, "thou hast a ready mind. Be faithful to me and accomplish my designs and thou wilt never regret becoming a member of our secret order. But what are thy plans?"

And here a long and low conversation ensued, and Spenata chuckled as Caius proceeded.

"It shall be as thou sayest, Caius," spoke Spenata, "and I will meet thee at the place appointed. See thou dost it perfectly, and I will leave Huesca near in case the ordeal prove too great for the Queen. I need not say that thou must not take advantage of the character thou dost assume. Play it not too much like the life, lest thou err by over-zeal. Now, away, and put matters in train for the night's performance."

And the conspirators against true love separated, each to play his self-allotted part.

The day advanced, and the sun shed its cheering beams around, and the soft breeze from the sea cooled the air, and all passed merrily.

The King kept near the Queen all day, and hung around her as though loth to part from her a moment.

The gardens were thrown open to all and the Duke and Caius were there, but Bismantua had no opportunity of conversing with the Queen alone.

When the day's gaieties were over the Queen sought the retirement of the gardens as twilight settled o'er the earth.

"Alas, Bismantua," she mused, "when will all this separation end! How I have longed for one pressure of

the hand—one moment when we could be alone, to exchange sweet confidences and speak of the happy days to come. Where art thou now, my love? Dost thou think of me as I of thee?"

The words had scarcely passed her lips ere the Duke stood before her.

"My love, my Costanza, how I have watched and longed for this sweet moment."

And as he spake he took her in his arms and kissed her fondly.

"Beloved," replied the Queen, "I was this moment wishing to see you. My love, how lonely I have been this day. And now, at this soft and gentle hour, you are with me." And she looked up to him with eyes full of deep meaning, and he pressed her to his heart, and they stood together in close but silent sympathy.

And the stars came out one by one and shed their faint light around, and they listened to the soft murmur of the sea and the rustling of the wind, and all spoke to them of peace and love.

"Thus it will be with our joint lives, Costanza," said the Duke. "By and by, we shall never be separated, but life will be one long sweet dream, and our being shall merge, and our souls unite nearer and nearer. You will ever love me, Costanza!"

"Aye, forever love you." Softly replied the Queen. "But listen, I hear some footsteps! It is the King. Remain here, my love, while I go forth to meet him. Remember my letter. Come to-night, and place your scarf around your turban as I said. Farewell!"

And offering her lips, their spirits mingled in one short embrace, and then the Queen tore herself away.

The Duke watched the forms and heard the greeting and knew it was the King.

“All have been wondering, your Majesty, where you were,” said the King. “Then, I thought me, that you would be weary with all the gaiety, and sought you here. Let us turn into this summer-house. I shall not again have many opportunities of speaking to you alone.”

And the King led her into the summer-house, and placed a seat for her, facing the east, and the moon just showed herself, with a faint streak of light.

“Costanza,” said the King, taking the Queen’s hand and raising it to his lips, “when last we were alone you fainted and I had to bear you to your room. Since then you appear to have avoided our being together. But now, beloved Queen, you must hear me ere I leave for Sepania.”

“Oh, not now, noble King,” replied Costanza, in great alarm. “They will be looking for me from the palace, and it is not fitting that I should be out with your Majesty in the darkness alone.”

“Be not alarmed, Costanza,” replied the King. “We are too high in power for scandal to touch us. The only one who has the right to scrutinize your actions is your noble father, and I have his permission to address you ere I leave for my Kingdom. Listen, therefore, to me, noble Queen, when I offer my hand and heart to you as I do now.”

And the King knelt before her and took the other hand and kissing them, continued:

“Long have I loved you, Costanza, and patiently have I waited for this moment. And now let me have one loving word that you will be mine. Your father

assents and stated that it has been the wish of his heart for us to be united. But you are silent, Costanza. Have I been too abrupt? And yet I desired to win your love and not force your assent. Answer me, Costanza! Give me one word of hope and I shall leave well satisfied."

"Alas," sorrowfully replied the Queen, and her voice sounded as though a tear obstructed her speech, "our hearts are not our own when touched by other love. This cannot be as you and my father have desired. Oh, forgive me, King Pinto, if in ought my conduct has led you to believe I should assent to this alliance."

"No," replied the King with bitterness, "I will testify that you have given me no encouragement."

Then, as though touched by a feeling of jealous resentment, he continued:

"Have I to thank that presumptuous Parsee for your refusal? Some words were told me of certain love passages between you, but I could never believe that the powerful Queen of Savelona would stoop to mate with a low-born adventurer."

"Speak not thus, King Pinto," said the Queen. "You know not the Duke de Bismantua. He is well-born, and worthy of the highest alliance that earth can give."

"Let him beware how he crosses my path," replied the King, deep anger resting on his brow.

The Duke, noticing that the King and Queen turned to come to the summer-house, had stood behind one of the pillars, and, so as not further to complicate the Queen, remained concealed, and heard all that passed.

How he was confirmed in the deep and pure love of the Queen, and his heart's thanks went up to Heaven when he heard her replies. But he felt deeply for her

trial, yet could think of no way to relieve her distress. To disclose himself would add to the fury of the King, and he bore the offensive terms without any outward sign.

When the Queen heard the King's threats, a shudder passed through her frame, and she feared lest the Duke should disclose himself, for she could hear his suppressed breathing, and knew that he was near.

"The Duke has never intentionally wronged your Majesty," said the Queen. "He was here before your visit, and my heart was his long ere I knew your Majesty sought my unworthy hand. Oh, if I could give you my kingdom, King Pinto, how gladly would I resign my crown, with all its power, and pass my years in quiet seclusion."

"If I report our conversation to your father," replied the King, "you are nearer having seclusion than you imagine. It is a pet desire with him to unite the kingdoms by our marriage. This would not weigh with me, Costanza, were I not deeply in love with you. I am satisfied with Sepania, but cannot give up my claim to your hand. My love, re-consider your decision, and let your father's wishes join with mine to urge our alliance. I trust I am not hateful to you, Costanza? And if not, I will wait sometime to enable you to know me better."

The Queen was deeply touched by the forbearance in the King, and replied:

"But for the reasons I have given you, King Pinto, I would do my best to carry out the joint wishes of you and my father. You have nobly spoken, and I trust will as nobly act. And then I hope some fairer woman will bless you with her love. But will you not lead me to

the palace? I have to prepare for the ball to-night."

And the Queen rose from her seat and taking the King's arm they walked towards the palace in silence.

The Duke kept them in sight until they reached the entrance hall, and then sought his rooms to prepare for the ball.

His step was elastic and his heart beat high in hope. He had heard the sweetest and surest confirmation that he was beloved. He realized the great sacrifice the Queen was making for him, and he loved her more and more.

"Beloved Costanza, my life shall be devoted to make you happy, I am not worthy of such deep passion, but I will strive to become so, and your gentle influence shall bind me to the pure and good and chaste and holy."

Thus he mused, and as he walked again through the gardens the moon had risen high in the heavens, and he heard the soft strains of music from the palace, and knew that the revels had commenced.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE PLOT SUCCEEDS — THE QUEEN'S DELIRIUM.

While the Duke lingered in the garden enjoying love's enchantment, a different scene was enacted in the palace.

There had been the opening dance, led off by the King and Queen, and her Majesty had just seated herself near the door leading into the interior of the palace.

As she gazed sorrowfully to see who entered, she saw a man who looked towards her and beckoned with his hand for the Queen to follow him.

She cast but one glance, and seeing her scarf fastened on the turban as suggested in her letter, she rose from her seat with a joyous smile and went forward in the direction indicated.

The man who was masked as all the others were, including the Queen, held the door open for her to pass through, and then taking her hand pressed it gently and led her quickly through the passage, placing his finger on his lips to show the necessity for silence.

The passages were not fully lighted and the Queen had no opportunity of conversing or noticing anything that might, in cooler moments, have appeared strange. But when the figure led her to the private room of her father, she said:

“Where go we, Bismantua? This is my father's private chamber. Were it not well to wait until the King has left the palace ere we speak to him?”

She received no answer, except a gentle pressure of the hand and another sign for silence, and the door opened and she found herself confronted by her father.



TAKING HYPATHIA ASIDE, AND TOUCHING HIS FOREHEAD SIGNIFICANTLY, HE  
SAID, "I FEAR THE DISEASE IS HERE." See p. 293.



To add to her dismay, the hand that held hers loosed its hold, and the figure glided from the room, and she heard him laugh aloud and close the door.

"What means this farce, Costanza?" sternly inquired her father. "Who is this man who brought you into my presence and left you here?"

The Queen was too stunned to reply and her head became dizzy, and she feared another swoon; but she had sufficient presence of mind to seat herself in a chair, and then she fainted gently away.

Spenata touched a bell and Huesca came from the adjoining room.

"Here is the Queen again fainting," said the Archbishop. "Give her some restorative, and I will send for one of her maids and place her in charge. She must be very weak for a slight thing like this to effect her. Do you know, Huesca, that at times I wonder if she be mentally afflicted for she often acts most strangely."

Thus her father threw out the first hint in a deep scheme which he had planned to restrict the Queen's liberty. But so that it should not be spoken of except in case of need, he added:

"I must ask you to watch over and guard the Queen from all intrusion, Huesca. Especially do not let this idea get abroad until it is fully confirmed by close observation.

Thus speaking, the Archbishop summoned an attendant, and said to him:

"Proceed quietly to the ball-room and bring Hypathia here. Do not let any others accompany her, for the Queen has been taken ill and requires perfect repose. Away."

The attendant was not long in doing his errand, and as he returned with Hypathia, the Queen recovered from her swoon.

She looked sadly around as though she could not understand where she was, and Huesca offered her a small urn of strong scents.

This recovered her somewhat and she rose to leave the room, but a deep paleness overspread her features, and she would have fallen had not Hypathia and the physician supported her.

"The Queen is very ill," said Huesca. "I will assist Hypathia to bear her to her chamber, and then her Majesty must be kept perfectly quiet and no one allowed to see her for some time."

Thereupon the Queen was gently assisted by the physician and Hypathia, but ere they had proceeded far Spenata followed, saying:

"Take the Queen into this bedroom. Her own is too far away."

And he led the way into the sleeping apartment which had been assigned to him during his stay at Sordello, and he and the physician left her in the hands of Hypathia, with strict instructions to permit no one to approach the royal patient.

The Queen sank feebly on the first seat that presented itself. Her eyes were sad and wild, yet she uttered not a word.

"Was this my noble lover?" she asked herself. "Could he be so cruel? Ah, if he could but sport with me like this where shall I turn for true nobility! And yet, there was my scarf, and he pressed my hand. But what meant that diabolical laugh! Did the presence of

my father turn his brain as it affected mine. O, father, how much you have to answer for if you are not kind to your own offspring."

Yet she wept not, but ever and anon placed her hands upon her brow as though to stop its throbbing.

"Will your Majesty permit me to prepare you for bed?" gently enquired Hypathia.

Receiving no reply, the maid proceeded to remove the gay trappings in which the Queen had appeared at the ball, and when this was done she gently laid her patient on the bed. And yet the Queen spoke not.

A gentle knock was heard, and Hypathia, opening the lattice work, observed that it was the physician returning. She opened the door and admitted him, and going to the side of the bed looked into her eyes, and then the Queen closed them again and lay listless as before.

Taking Hypathia aside, and touching his forehead significantly, he said:

"I fear the disease is here, but her father desires proof before a single word is uttered to that effect. I will send you a composing draught and you must give it to her at once. But admit no one to see her, except her father."

The ball proceeded for some time before it became generally known that the Queen was ill; but Spenata informed the King that Costanza was seriously indisposed and that there was no possibility of her appearing again, and the company gradually dispersed.

The Duke heard with great sadness of the Queen's illness and blamed himself for lingering in the garden so long and at last was forced to return to his inn without having seen her.

"What means this deep sorrow that comes over me,"

inused the Duke. "Methinks thou art suffering greatly, Costanza, and yet I cannot aid thee except by my prayers. Alas, what frail mortals we are and never certain what an hour may bring forth."

At last weary of thought he lay down to rest, and as the morning dawned he found solace in sleep.

The following day he wandered through the grounds but could learn no further tidings of the Queen, except that she continued very ill.

The physician suggested that the Queen should be moved to her own sleeping apartments and another maid was commissioned to help Hypathia.

Again strict injunctions were given that no one should be allowed to visit the Queen. Costanza continued as on the previous night and appeared to have lost all interest in life. Her very apathy was playing into the hands of her father and his plans were ripening to fulfillment.

When King Pinto expressed his intention to leave Sordello he went to Spenata, inquired anxiously after the Queen, and besought an interview.

"It may not be," said the Archbishop. "The Queen is seriously ill and Huesca enjoins the strictest quiet. But I will go to her and inform her you are leaving Sordello to-day. Perhaps it may rouse her somewhat."

"And express to her my deepest sympathy," said the King, "and the hope for her speedy recovery."

And Spenata went to the Queen bearing the King's message, but it roused her not. She listened as one who heard not and sent back no reply. Truly her heart had been deeply wounded, and she heard constantly that

fiendish laugh, and felt again her desolation when she thought of the Duke's abandonment.

Spenata returned to the King and reported that she continued very ill.

"But," said he, "rest and quiet in this retired palace and grounds will be her best medicine, and when she is well again I will explain to her your wishes for her hand and communicate with you, and fear not, she will assent."

The King was compelled to be satisfied with this assurance, and summoning his soldiers, quickly marched homeward to Sepania.

"What means the sounds of trumpets?" inquired the Queen.

"The King of Sepania leaves to-day for home," replied Maria, the new waiting maid, pleased to observe that the Queen took an interest in the outside world. "His Majesty sent a farewell message and greatly desired to see you ere he started on his journey. Shall we recall the King?"

"No," replied the Queen, "I am weary and cannot see anyone. Oh, faithless and perjured one why didst thou woo me and then throw me aside as worthless."

These words she added in a lower tone as though conversing with herself. Maria was greatly surprised, and said:

"Nay, noble Queen, the King desired greatly to see you and earnestly besought your father to sanction his doing so."

But Costanza heeded not, and when Maria afterwards repeated the Queen's words to Spenata he smiled and said:

"These are delusions, Maria. The Queen believes

that King Pinto has slighted and abandoned her. But you must humor her Majesty, and if you hear more, report to the physician, for State affairs compel me to proceed to Savelona. I shall, however, return as speedily as possible. In the meantime be careful with your patient and follow strictly Huesca's orders."

And Spenata left for the capital as it was necessary for him to prepare the people for the Queen's long absence, for he had decided not to allow her to return until she consented to become the bride of King Pinto.

Before he left Sordello, however, he had a long private interview with Pompora.

"The plan has worked admirably," said Spenata, "and you played your part to perfection. That quick abandonment and musical laugh has shattered all love for the Duke and made the Queen believe him faithless. But how goes the enemy? Does he still believe the Queen loves him, or have you shown him that she was playing a part with him in the touching garden scene?"

"I have to be very discreet," replied Caius, "and can only touch on these matters slightly. It would never do to let him see my hand too soon. But your grace may rely on me taking the best steps to carry out your plan for the marriage with King Pinto, and while you are away I will keep my eye upon the Duke and intercept any communications between him and the Queen."

"Be it so," said the Archbishop, "I leave matters in your hands, and if you bring about the alliance I desire you shall reap substantial rewards. In the meantime here is a purse for present necessaries and apply to me for more when that is empty."

And the false friend and the false father parted, and

each went to play his mimic action on the allotted field.

Thus, from age to age, the false and true live near together, and loving hearts are separated by deceit and fraud.

Caius and the Duke continued to reside at the same inn, and the Roman could watch all the movements of the Duke. They met at the regular meals and also in the royal gardens and frequently conversed together.

"Hear you how the Queen is?" inquired the Duke. "It is sad to think of her continued illness. Know you ought of the cause Caius?"

"It is said to be something about her sorrow at parting with the King of Sepania," replied the Roman. "I hear they were to have been married here, but affairs of State hurried the King back to his kingdom ere the marriage could be consummated."

"That is a gross untruth," angrily replied the Duke. "I am sure that the Queen contemplates nothing of the kind. Who has set such an unfounded rumor afloat? Caius."

"It is the common topic of the palace," replied Pompora, "and the King and Queen had a parting scene in the royal summer-house on the night of the masked ball and the Queen has never looked up since that day. I hear she raves night and day for the King and longs for the days to pass so that he can return to her."

"Again I say, Caius, thou liest," angrily retorted the Duke. "She is too noble a Queen to so demean herself, besides she loves not the King, and means not to marry him."

"And how learnt you the state of the Queen's heart?"

laughingly inquired Pompora "Are you the royal leech having access to her Majesty?"

The Parsee saw that he had been too open in his expressions and knew not how to extricate himself from the difficulty, except by an open confession. He yearned, too, for sympathy, and although he knew that Caius was not looked upon with much favor by Marcel and his party, the Duke had seen nothing to justify suspicion, and therefore replied:

"I heard it from the Queen, and I know from the same source that she loves not the King of Sepania."

"Ah, I see how matters are, my lord Duke," replied Pompora, "although you keep things very close. But perhaps I could aid you in your love passages if I would."

And Caius looked closely upon the Parsee and a smile hovered around the mouth of the deceitful Roman as he thought upon the scenes he had witnessed at Savelona and Sordello, for Caius had been a spectator of both the interviews between the Queen and the Duke.

"I know not how you could do so, Caius," replied the Parsee, "for I heard you had offended the Archbishop at Savelona and were put under arrest. How came that about, Pompora?"

"I was over-zealous in your behalf, Bismantua," replied the Roman, "and craved certain privileges for you. I then learnt that you had fallen under the Archbishop's displeasure, and had been seen in private interview with her Majesty. I showed how you were the son of a powerful king and had the right to approach the Queen if you were so inclined; and for this bold speaking

I was for some time a prisoner, and saw fearful sights, and know how merciless Spenata can be in his anger."

"Alas, I fear that is so," said the Duke, "and I wonder that one so cruel should possess a daughter so gentle and good. But the Queen's mother must have been of a very different nature to Spenata."

"I understand," said Caius, "that Spanish blood ran in the mother's veins, and that the deposed Queen, Ivena, takes after her. There is no accounting for these freaks of nature. But what are you going to do, Bismantua? Surely we can get a letter to the Queen?"

The Duke looked upon the light-hearted Roman with sorrowful eyes, as he replied:

"The Queen is too carefully watched and guarded for any letter to reach her hands. Oh, would she were well and that we could meet."

"If you like to write to the Queen," said Caius, "I will be the bearer, and will try and bribe the waiting-maids. Cheer up, Bismantua."

"No," replied the Duke, "I cannot stoop to bribery. When the Queen is well enough to see me, she will communicate with me. I trust her fully."

"Then your delay may be prejudicial to your suit," said Caius, "and if so blame not your friend, Pompora."

And the Roman turned on his heel and walked away singing snatches of Roman love-songs, while the Duke continued his walk to the royal summer-house, and there lived over again the sweet meeting with Costanza, and as he sat, he mused:

"What ails thee, beloved Costanza. Wilt thou not let me have one word of loved remembrance. Have I

offended thee, or why this silence. Oh, that I could fly to thee and ease thy grief!"

And the wind appeared to mourn sorrowfully through the trees of the garden, and the waves on the shore threw back the refrain, with a gentle echo, "Ease thy grief," and the Duke listened as though he heard a deep sigh proceeding from the Queen's apartments.

"What can I do for thee, my beloved, to ease thy pain. Let thy sweet voice answer and command me."

But there was no reply, and the wind grew stronger than before, and the branches of the trees swayed heavily over the watcher's head, and the sky became obscured by clouds, and a great tempest arose, followed by thunder and lightning.

The Duke took shelter in the palace and as he entered he heard a scream as of some one in fear.

"What means that cry of alarm?" he inquired. "Will you send and see if anything is happening to the Queen?"

And one of the attendants went to the Queen's apartments, and quickly returning said:

"It is the Queen terrified by the fearful storm. But she is quieter now, and the physician is near to assist his royal patient."

"And what ails her Majesty?" inquired the Duke.  
"And is there any progress towards her recovery?"

"She will be no better," replied the attendant, "until the King of Sepania returns to comfort her. She says he has deceived and abandoned her. But this is only a delusion, for all in the palace know he was deeply attached to her, and only awaits a word to come from Sepania to take her to his home. Alas, that one so lovely as the Queen should have such delusions."

The Duke waited to hear no more, but took his way sorrowfully to his rooms in the inn.

While matters were thus proceeding with the Queen and the Duke, Marcel and his party, having exhausted all their efforts to gain tidings respecting Serapta and her babe and Coppia, returned sorrowfully to Savelona, and reported the destruction of the ancient temple on the island of Lemnia.

The Archbishop heard the news unmoved. His mind had passed away from Benoni and his persecution of Serapta, and was filled by his scheme to bring his daughter to consent to a marriage with King Pinto.

"There ends the chapter of my defeat on the Hill of Sacrifice," mused the Archbishop. "Benoni is banished; Ivena is deposed; Serapta dead; and Costanza is now supreme Queen of this great kingdom, and I have only to play my cards well and she will soon be united to King Pinto of Sepania. Ah, this scheming is the fun of life. What would my existence be worth unless I had a favorite plan on the way to follow the one ended."

Thus lightly he thought of Serapta, and less of the keeper of the mysteries, of Lemnia, and the old gate-keeper, who were all believed to have perished in the flames.

"So, Athos and Aenus have both perished, with those wonderful dogs, Pola and Pontius. I am sorry for the hounds, as I may yet require them for that Duke de Bismantua. He had better be careful how he crosses my path. I would make an end of him now, but it might kill Costanza, and her death would mar all my schemes."

Thus mused the wicked priest. He possessed no gen-

uine feelings of sympathy, but looked on mankind as puppets with which he played the game of life.

Monica and Bishop Angelus were deeply grieved. They had known the Princess so well and had loved her greatly.

“Alas,” said the Bishop, “how can we communicate the sad tidings to Prince Benoni? “She was all the world to him, and they loved each other fondly.”

“There is a hope, dear Angelus, of a re-union beyond the grave,” softly replied his wife. “If we could not thus look forward how dreary life would become on such a loss as this.”

And husband and wife thus conversed and were drawn very near together, and the time drew nigh when they were to start for Constantinople.

“But why does Bismantua linger at Sordello?” inquired Marcel. “As for Pompura I care not if he stay behind, but the Duke must return with me.”

“I doubt whether he will be ready to do so,” replied Monica. “There is an attraction in this kingdom we possess not in the Roman Empire. He and the Queen have had some love passages, and the Duke stays at Sordello to be near the Queen, who I hear is very ill.”

“Then I must away to Sordello and lay the matter before him, for I cannot leave this part until I have done so, and taken his decision. But I fear, Monica, that he will not get her father’s consent, for the Archbishop is set upon the Queen’s marriage with King Pinto.”

“Love laughs at these outside arrangements,” replied Monica, “and if both are faithful and true, in the end they must come together.”

"Then do you believe, Monica, that marriages are made in Heaven?" inquired the Bishop.

"I think they have Heaven's aid and blessing where true love exists," replied the Bishop's wife. "And further, I believe that there is a mate for every one. See how equally the sexes come, and there must be design in this as in all things else."

"Ah, dear wife," answered Angelus, "the designs and plans of the Creator are little known, and 'tis hard to put our finger here, and say 'tis Providence, and there, and say 'tis chance. Yet, I believe, all things tend to good, and God is everywhere, although we see Him not."

"And think you, Angelus," inquired Marcel, "that God was ever incarnate in the flesh?"

The Bishop was troubled at the question, and a sigh escaped him, as he replied:

"I am deeply engaged upon this question now, Marcel. It is most important for me to decide it for myself and others. It is to have greater opportunities of looking up the ancient and modern writings that I hasten to Constantinople and Rome. There are the great depositories of Christian truth and Christian falsehood. Alas, what shall I discover there!"

"You will discover there, Angelus," replied Marcel, "many suppressions, and great destruction of the writings of the last three hundred years, and many pious frauds abroad. Alas, that truth should be so warped and hedged around that it takes a lifetime to unearth it. And yet, Angelus, I believe that all unbiased minds, from a study of history, will see how all these ideas have grown from small beginnings. Ours is an age ready to receive the miraculous. Men are accustomed to gods

coming down from Heaven and dwelling amongst men to train them for a happier home. And how near Heaven is, too, Angelus, according to the popular mind; yet, we know, that it is far away, and branches out into immensity."

As Marcel thus spoke, the sadness on the face of Angelus deepened, and, when the soldier ceased, the Bishop, in sorrowful tones, replied:

"Marcel, these are great questions, and when I dwell upon them my strength feels powerless to grope with them. There has ever been religion from the dawn of history, when the Creator said, 'Let there be light and there was light,' but this was only physical, the spiritual light has yet to come. Oh, who shall reveal it! Who shall show us any good!"

And a stillness fell upon the assembled friends, and each heart heard a gentle echo, "Reveal it! Who shall show us any good!"

And thus it is from age to age, and men wonder, and at times are sad, waiting for the great revealment, and still the cry is, "Who shall show us any good!"





"COME TO ME, MY LOVE, COME." See p. 311.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH AND EVIDENCES OF THE  
RESURRECTION.

Early the following morning, Angelus sought the Archbishop, and related to him fully the destruction of the ancient temple on the island of Lemnia and the sad fate of the keeper of the mysteries and the others.

"Thus ends the old worn out religion of this ancient land," said Spenata, when he had heard the narrative. "It is a fitting termination to fanaticism and superstition. Thus, in fire, will end the Christian religion, and thus ends all things."

"Of that we know not," said Angelus. "As the beginning is in mystery, so shall the end be, if end there is."

"Mystery, aye, all is mystery," retorted the Archbishop, "but Christianity is now the order of the day. But, you have business with me, Angelus, what is your wish?"

"That I may go to Rome and Constantinople," replied the Bishop.

"Why go there, Angelus?" inquired the Archbishop. "Surely the souls at Savelona are as precious to Deity as those of the Romans? Why then run away from here, now you have become popular and useful?"

"There are many reasons why I want to go. Besides I have promised Monica," replied the Bishop.

"Oh, if you have promised your wife," sneered Spenata, "you must go, or there will be no peace in Zion. I know what women are when they get a promise and an idea into their heads."

"I had decided in any case to go," sorrowfully replied

Angelus. "My mind has been greatly exercised as to the truth of the Christian religion, and I can only search out the truth at Rome and Constantinople."

"Why all this nonsense about the truth of Christianity?" angrily said the Archbishop. "Surely you had tested all that before you came to unsettle the minds of the people of Savelona, if not you should have done so."

"I feel it a great reproach to me," humbly answered Angelus, "that I did not look into the evidences of Christianity before I presumed to teach it. But, alas, how few search for the truth. I was blindly led into the faith and believed all I was told."

"And what do you expect to find at Rome or Constantinople," inquired the Archbishop, "that you cannot as easily discover here? Surely the waters of Savelona are as pure as the foul stream of the Tiber, which has for ages received the filth of Rome?"

"I expect," replied the Bishop, "to find at Rome the writings of Pliny, Tacitus, Josephus, Sentonius, and others confirming the resurrection of our Lord. This was the great sign promised, and on it rests the truth of Christ's Divinity."

"You are going on a wild goose journey, Angelus," spake the Archbishop. "If these writings confirm the resurrection you would have heard of them long ago; and if they do not, depend upon it that Constantine and the heads of the Christian Church will take care that they never come to light."

"Ah, think you so," sadly answered Angelus, "but surely there ought to be honesty in Christianity!"

"There is honesty to the Church and honesty to the creed," replied the Archbishop. "We are always bound

to support the religion of the State, but to expose the errors of the Church is no part of our duty. Surely, Angelus, you would thus be taught during the course of your preparation?"

"I was taught," replied Angelus, sorrowfully, "that the Church could not err."

"And no church can err," said the Archbishop, "so long as it is a State religion. All it does and says, during such a period is right; but when once schism is let in no one knows where it will end. In Savelona, I mean to put down heresy and schism as soon as they show their heads, that is the only way to have peace, and depend upon it if you go to Rome or Constantinople with your present purpose you will go to your death or speedy banishment."

Angelus listened with surprise and sorrow to the expression of these views, and replied:

"There have been many martyrs to truth, and I shall be one to the search of truth."

"Those slain are martyrs to an idea, or for an opinion only," said the Archbishop. "Martyrs to truth they cannot be, for truth is as yet undiscovered and unrevealed."

"Say not so, Spenata, for if you do I shall begin to think that there has been no revelation from the Creator; and surely He would not leave his children in the dark!"

"That is a childish idea, Angelus, for history shows that men for four thousand years knew not the truth, and Jesus revealed nothing with certainty. You can trace His ideas from the past, and find the spot of earth wherein they grew, and identify the planter of the seed."

"And yet," said the Bishop, with sadness, "His life is beautiful and pure and chaste and holy."

"It must have been so," said Spenata, "otherwise it would not have attracted any followers. But, you must not forget, that He never wrote any of His sayings, and His disciples never wrote until it was necessary to define their doctrines, and then all that generation had passed away. You are right to this extent, Angelus, that the truth or falsehood as to the resurrection must be searched for in the outside Jewish and Roman writings. Go, therefore, to Rome and become a martyr for your search for truth, but remember when that comes to pass that I have warned you."

"I want a further favor of you," said the Bishop, "and that is to sanction our having one of the royal ships to carry us away."

"And who goes with you?" inquired the Archbishop.

"Marcel, the Duke of Bismantua, Caius Pompora, my wife, Orlando, and the Romans who came with Marcel. I believe, also, that Orlando desires to take soldiers and rowers so as to bring back the ship," said the Bishop.

"A deep laid scheme, I warrant me," answered Spenata, "but I fancy we shall be able to retain what we have got; yet I see Orlando's plot to bring back Ivena. However, I will speak with him. Adieu!"

And the ecclesiastics parted, Angelus to prepare for his voyage, and Spenata to hasten to Sordello, for he was desirous of testing his plans with Costanza.

"It must be as I wish," mused the Archbishop, as he proceeded on his way to the Royal gardens. "Costanza must consent to this alliance with Pinto. This up-

start Duke can give her no additional power, and to fail Pinto now, would bring about a war with Sepania. No, the Queen must consent."

In this mood he reached the palace of Sordello.

"And how fares the Queen!" inquired Spenata of the royal physician. "Is she restored to health of mind and body?"

"Her physical health seems better," answered Huesca. "And she walks in the Royal gardens frequently, but she has a listless air, as though life itself were a burden too heavy for her to bear. She must be roused, or I fear she will sink into a decline and pass away."

"I have come from Savelona to rouse her, Huesca," replied the Archbishop. "And I desire to speak with her as to the alliance with King Pinto. Has she spoken of him at all during my absence?"

"She has not mentioned his name," answered the physician, "but she has spoken of having been abandoned and betrayed; that is her great grief. Remove this idea, your grace, and her recovery will be speedy."

"I will endeavor to do so, Huesca," replied Spenata. And the men parted. Huesca to go forth to exercise his healing art, while Spenata, walking through the grounds, pondered on the best means of bringing his daughter to look with favor on his plans.

His ruminations ended, he sought the Queen, and found her in the summer-house, listening, with listless air and saddened face, to the song of the birds as they carrolled forth their morning song of praise.

She heard not his approach, and, for some time, he stood gazing upon her, and noted how all her sprightliness had gone from her. She was the same and yet

very different, and he scarcely knew what she had lost.

"Costanza," he said, soft and low. But she heeded not and seemed as though she did not hear.

Again, he said, "Costanza," and took her hand. "Are you not glad to see me, Costanza? I have travelled far and fast, for I was anxious to relieve your distress. Hu-esca tells me you are somewhat better in health, but that you feel the parting with the King. I will summon him back, and then I shall see the roses again in your cheeks, the sparkle in your eye, and your tread will be as elastic as before. Oh, this love, this love!"

The Queen looked at him with listless gaze and no smile appeared upon her face, but a deeper sadness stole over her, and at length she answered:

"I do not understand you, father. The parting with the King was no great grief, yet I am abandoned, despised and mocked."

"You are mistaken, Costanza," answered her father.

"Mistaken," quickly exclaimed the Queen. "Mistaken, Oh, say you so. Let me hear that again, and I will bless you."

And a Heavenly smile illumed her face, and she gazed into the distance with a wrapt and happy expression, and continued:

"And does he still love me? Was that scene but a fatal dream? Oh, tell me father, for you seemed present, that he did not abandon me, and laugh, as I thought I heard him, ere I awoke to painful consciousness? Answer me, truly, father, and say he has not betrayed me, but is as true as ever?"

"He has not abandoned you, Costanza," answered her father, trying to soothe her, "he loves you still, for he

has told me so, and waits anxiously to hear that you are prepared to make him the happiest of men."

"Is this truly so, father, and you would not deceive me?" answered the Queen, looking happy at the thought that the Duke still loved her. "But," she continued, and the happiness gradually faded from her face, "what meant that dreadful laugh, which rings in my ears as a knell to my departed happiness? Was this but a dream, father? Did he not abandon me, and laugh at my misery?"

"No, Costanza, he never laughed at you, but always loved you ever since he first saw you," answered Spenata, "and he loves you now deeply and truly. Shall I send for him, Costanza, to come to you, and he will quickly give you assurance of his deep and lasting love."

"Oh, send for him, my father," answered the Queen, "I cannot rest until I see him. My love, my own," continued the Queen, still thinking of the Duke. "Come to me quickly and banish the last lingering doubt,"

As she ceased to speak, she rose from her seat as though listening, and, extending her hands, continued:

"Bismantua, I hear you call. Come to me, my love, come!"

But she saw no form, and gradually a deep pallor overspread her face, and she seated herself again near her father, and laying her head on his shoulder, said:

"He comes not! And yet I heard his voice. Oh, why delays my love! Bismantua, your Costanza waits for you. Come, my love, come!"

But no one came in answer to her call, and she returned

to her sad dejection. Her father tried to rouse her, but failed, and her mind began to wander.

“Alas, beauteous flower,” she said, looking upon a rose just blown, “how quickly thou must fade and pass away. Thus all things die, and so must I, and all will be as though I had never been. And the sun shall shine, and the breeze shall gently stir the leaves, and nature shall clothe itself with beauty, but I shall see it no more. And where goes my spirit! And shall I see thee again, Bismantua! Will thy pure soul unite with mine. Oh, my beloved, I will come to thee, and all will be joy.”

Thus she rambled in her talk, and her father listened, and even his hard heart felt a touch of pity, but his resolution was not shaken in its purpose.

“I cannot consent to this unknown Duke marrying my daughter,” he mused. “After all my plans so deftly woven, to be upset. No, I must send for the King, and keep away the Duke, and all will yet be well. By and by, Costanza’s mind will be restored, and she will remember the Duke as in a dream. I must work in this direction, and Huesca must aid me. But, first, I must get the Duke to go with Marcel’s party to Constantinople; and Caius shall go with them to see that the Parsee does not return.”

Thus the father planned to defeat his daughter’s happiness and retard her recovery. The Queen, who was of a highly nervous temperament and very timid, had been greatly tried through the lengthened visit of King Pinto. The necessity, too, of concealing her passion for the Duke until the King returned to Sepania, had told greatly upon her physical health; and when, as she thought, the Duke had led her into the presence of her father, and

then abandoned her, and laughed at the exploit, her powers of endurance gave way, and she sank into the dreamy, hazy state.

But now, the conversation with her father appeared to give a glimpse of hope. The Queen, however, was in that state of mind that she could not fully grasp the true position of matters, nor reason consecutively. Yet from that interview it was noticed that she appeared happier, and ceased to talk of abandonment and desertion.

Her cry was, "Come, my love, come quickly. Costanza waits for thee." And when there was no reply, and when no one came, she relapsed into dreamy musings, and spoke of the futility of earthly hopes, and dwelt upon the changing things of life.

She was in this state of mind when Monica arrived at Sordello.

"And may I see the Queen?" the Bishop's wife inquired of the good physician. "I am about to proceed to Constantinople, and would be glad to be able to bear any message to her sister."

"I do not see that it would now harm the Queen," replied Huesca. "She has been alone with her own thoughts so long that a change might be desirable. But we must get her father's consent as well, and you had better speak to him."

Monica took an early opportunity of conversing with the Archbishop on the subject.

"You may see her, Monica," he replied, "but must be prepared to find a great change in her. Something has shaken her mind and she has delusions. You must,

however, humor her, and in any event not speak of her state to any one."

Monica assented to this, and when the Queen was in the summer-house, her father led Monica forward.

"I have brought Monica to see you, Costanza," said her father. "She is proceeding to Constantinople and desired to see you ere she started. I will leave you together a short time."

A sweet smile came into the Queen's face, and she rose to receive her friend, and kissing her, said:

"I am pleased to see you, Monica. Your presence recalls the happy days when the Duke was with us at Savelona. You know how he loves me, Monica, and I return that love. And my father is now ready for our marriage. But I want my sister here, Monica. Oh, would that she might return, and then I could go away with Bismantua, and we should be so happy. Just as the Prince Benoni and Serapta were all alone on the Sacred Island. Fancy, Monica, we should be all in all to each other, and there would be no State ceremony, and no pomp, and no deceit, and no fraud and ambition."

"We have each to take the lot in life assigned to us," said Monica, "and bear well our part. Yet, Costanza, if you would desire to resign your crown and go into seclusion, perhaps if your sister were here your father might not object."

"He would not, Monica; no he would not," eagerly replied the Queen, "if he knew my health and happiness depended on it, for he loves me, Monica, I am sure he does. Of late, he has been so kind to me, and now he will deny me nothing. But everything depends on Ivena returning to her kingdom. And now Serapta is dead,

perhaps Benoni will love and marry Ivena, for I know she loved him deeply. I did not know so well when she was here because I had not felt the effects of love myself, but now I have met Benoni's brother, I understand my sister loved Benoni deeply. See them, Monica, and get them to come and reign here instead of me, and I and the Duke will go to his home or to some island where I can have my love all to myself."

And thus the Queen wandered on and weaved sweet dreams where she and the Duke would be all in all to each other, with all the world shut out.

"I will see the Duke," answered Monica, "and he must come and see her, and you must tell him yourself to bring your sister, for nothing else but your wish will take him from your side."

"Oh, where is my love?" said the Queen, "why does he not come to me. Oh, Bismantua, how I long to see thee. Good Monica, send my love to him."

"I will speak to the physician and your father," answered Monica. "You have been very ill and that, I presume, has been the reason he has not seen you."

"But I have heard his voice," said Costanza, "and he has spoken to me words of sweetness, and told me his love was unchangeable. Yet, when I called he came not near and I could not enfold him in my arms. Methinks it must have been his spirit speaking to me, Monica. True love is ever thus, is it not?"

And the Queen gazed into the distance, and Monica saw that Costanza's thoughts were far away, and that she waited not for any reply.

"Ah, thus is love," mused Monica, "and when the body is weak the mind wanders into its own elysian fields

of thought and fancies it holds converse with the loved one."

And aloud she said:

"I will shortly bring the Duke to you, Costanza. He has truly been near you anxiously, waiting an opportunity to see you. Good day, Costanza, and Heaven aid and bless you."

And the good woman kissed her lovingly, and stroked her hair, and saw how illness had worn the frail cheek; and thus she left her, and Hypathia came forward to lead her mistress to her room.

While this interview was proceeding, Marcel had sought the Archbishop and urged also the loan of a ship to convey his party from the harbor of Sordello.

"I will decide shortly," replied Spenata. "I do not like to lose Angelus. He is a tower of strength in building up Christianity in this State, and his wife aids. Their characters are so beautiful and manners so winning that the people believe that it is Christianity that makes them so."

"This has ever been the greatest help to all religions," answered the young soldier. "But for these beautiful lives no religion would ever prosper. Truly, these are the salt of the earth and their sweetness savors all."

As they thus conversed Monica returned, and in answer to the Archbishop's inquiry, narrated the conversation with the Queen, and added:

"Nothing will satisfy her Majesty but that the Duke de Bismantua should accompany us to bring back her sister to grace the wedding to which I hear your grace has assented. I am going now to see the Duke and acquaint him with the Queen's wish. But her Majesty de-

sires to see the Duke to implore him to take this journey and at her request he will no doubt accompany us to Constantinople. Nothing else would induce him, I am sure. The physician assents to a meeting between the Queen and the Duke, if it has your grace's approval."

The Archbishop meditated a few moments and quickly turned over in his mind a plan for accomplishing his designs.

"I assent, as the physician sees no harm," answered Spenata, "but only to one interview as I fear it will excite my daughter greatly. And then, if so decided, the Duke and all of you can start on the voyage. Caius Pompora, I presume, accompanies you. He fell under our displeasure some time ago, and we would prefer that he was absent from our kingdom."

"Caius came with me," answered Marcel, "and if he so desire must return with us, otherwise I could have left him here without regret. But he may have his own reasons for desiring to stay away from the Roman Empire."

"He must overcome these reasons," answered Spenata. "At any event, he must start with you, and if he is afraid to return to his native land drop him down at some of the intermediate places and let him settle there."

And without more ado, the Archbishop prepared to take his leave, and on doing so spoke to Monica:

"Your request, Monica, shall be acceded to. Bring the Duke to see Costanza in the afternoon, and if it be so arranged, the ship shall be ready to-morrow to leave the harbor. I can refuse you nothing, Monica, for you aided in my recovery on the Sacred Island. But, alas, Serapta has gone never to return."

And the Archbishop walked away mournfully, his mind dwelling on the happy days in the island home.

## CHAPTER XX.

TRUE LOVE CURES ALL ILLS—COSTANZA BLOOMS LIKE THE ROSE.

At the time appointed, Monica led the Duke into the presence of the Queen, and there left the lovers together.

“Beloved Costanza,” said the Duke, when they were alone, “how I have longed to see you. Years appear to have passed since last we met, and yet, counting in ordinary time, the days may not be many. And now, my love, let me hear you again tell me that you are better.”

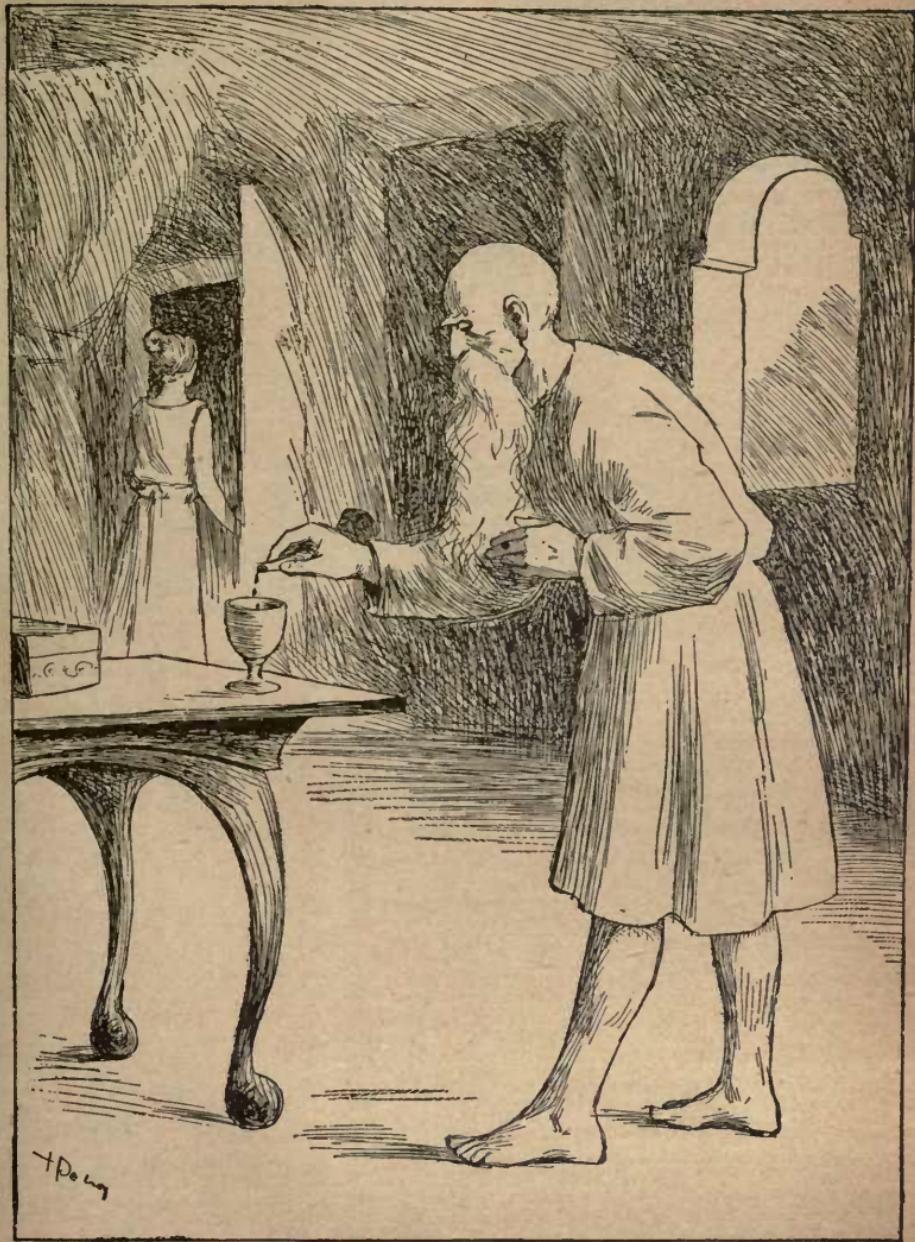
The Queen looked upon the Duke with eyes beaming with true affection, and her face wore a joyous expression, as she replied:

“To see you again, Bismantua, is joy unspeakable. And let me hear that you still love me and will do what I desire. Did Monica tell you how dearly I want my sister? Oh, let her return and take this crown which rests so heavily on my head, and let me find peace and repose for my weariness. You will go for Ivena, will you not, my love?”

“Whatever you wish, Costanza, I will do,” replied the Duke, “although it will be hard to tear myself away from this dear spot of earth.”

“But you will not be long away, Bismantua,” answered the Queen, looking up into his face with a gladsome smile, “and I shall look daily for your return, and grow well again, thinking of the happy days to come, when we shall be all in all to each other, and never be separated more.”

“And you will remain true to me, Costanza?” in-



WHILE MARIA WENT TO SPEAK TO THE QUEEN THE PHYSICIAN PLACED IN THE GOBLET A FEW DROPS OF LIQUID FROM A SMALL HORN. See p. 326.



quired the Duke. "And nothing induce you to forget our vows?"

The Queen looked at him reproachfully, as she replied: "Bismantua, how can you ask me these questions. You are my beloved. Have I not said that I live for you alone. Nothing can change my love but your desertion. Oh, Bismantua, you will never abandon me, never change or doubt my love. You were my first and only love, and if you forsake me I shall die."

The Queen alluded not to the scene in her father's room. She had made herself believe that it was all a hideous dream, and now the Duke was near her, the past appeared blotted out, and she lived but in the present moment.

The Duke took her in his arms and kissed and soothed her, and looking into the depths of those loving eyes, he said:

"I will trust you always, my beloved; and I will go and bring your sister from the Roman Empire, and then our union shall take place. And should any press you to marry them when I am away, Costanza, say you are betrothed to me and refuse to break this sacred vow. This you will do, Costanza, will you not?"

"Certainly," replied the Queen, looking upon him with surprise. "No one can ask me now, for all know I love you and you return my love. I told the King of Sepania that my heart was not my own, and he has gone away and will return no more."

"I trust that is so, beloved Costanza," said the Duke. "But if you are asked again to form an alliance with King Pinto, you must refuse; and should you be pressed, then seek the protection of the Chief, Durana. He will

aid you and save you from all harm. Promise that you will place yourself under his care, Costanza, in case of need."

"Yes, I promise," she replied. "But fear not, my love, no one will ask for the hand of your little Costanza until your return. And now you will soon be gone, and I shall pray for your safe return, but be not long away."

"Not a moment longer than is necessary, my love, to do your wish," replied the Duke.

And thus they sat and conversed, and then a soft feeling of peace filled their united souls, as the twilight settled upon the earth. The birds sang their last song and then took to their little resting places, and the flowers closed up their beauty for the night, and the stars came out one by one, and the gentle breeze from the sea moved the leaves in the trees, and the lovers drank in the beauty of the scene, and clasping their arms around each other, took a last long farewell, as Monica returned to lead the Queen to the palace, pursuant to the promise she had given Spenata.

"Monica," said the physician, who was waiting to receive the Queen, "you are the one to bring the bloom of health to the cheek. Your one prescription has been worth twenty of mine. If you were going to stay in Savelona my occupation would soon be gone. I shall now be jealous of Dr. Monica."

"Ah, Huesca," replied Monica, "those who have been through the trials of love know best the remedy to prescribe. Truly, the Queen looks like a new creature; and when I am away, noble Huesca, deal gently with her, and keep from her everything that would destroy the happy feelings she now possesses."

And Monica was about to say farewell, but the Queen besought her so earnestly to prolong her stay that the kind hearted woman could not refuse.

"Then I must send for Angelus," said Monica, "and we will stay at the palace until to-morrow, if our doing so will not weary your Majesty. What say you Huesca?"

"Your visit," replied the physician, "has had such a happy effect that I have no fear for the Queen. Therefore, we will send for the Bishop to pass the night at the palace. I will away and despatch a messenger at once."

And the two women were left alone, and the Queen fell on the breast of Monica, and wept aloud.

The elder woman kissed the Queen and comforted her for she was glad to see the tears. They were the first the Queen had shed since the fatal interview when she had thought herself deceived and betrayed.

When Costanza was more composed, she related to Monica the particulars of the ball and subsequent interview, but treated the mocking laugh as a delusion or a dream.

"I cannot well recall," said the Queen, "exactly what took place. I had looked forward to seeing the Duke with the scarf around his turban, and I fancied I saw him and he led me to my father, but I think I must have had a dream. Nay, I fancy I have had many dreams of late. But these tears, Monica, have washed away all my gloomy fancies. How glad I am you came to see me."

"Ah, your Majesty," replied Monica, "there has been a more skillful physician than either myself or Huesca. The Duke is the king of doctors now, and you must keep well and look forward to his return, for he will be true

to you, Costanza, and will return to claim your hand, so see that you do not inform any other that he is gone at your bidding."

"I shall ever love him," softly replied the Queen, and her face shone with beauty, and Monica gazed on her and doubted not.

While this conversation was proceeding, a very different interview was taking place in the palace between the Archbishop and Caius. The latter had been desired to proceed to the private room of Spenata, and as the Roman took a seat, the Archbishop opened the conversation:

"All matters are now arranged for the royal ship to leave the harbor to-morrow, and the Duke de Bismantua is to accompany them. I shall require you to go with the Duke and see that he does not return until you have intelligence from me that the Queen is married to King Pinto. Are you all ready to embark, and take up this mission?"

"There is one great difficulty," replied Caius. "I cannot return openly to the Roman Empire until my debts are paid. I must have the means to pay these and live when there, or I cannot return, for I should be arrested and thrown into prison."

"You shall have the money to do this," replied Spenata, "unless the amount is very heavy. What is your indebtedness, and what will it require to provide you with means for two or three years?"

Caius had prepared himself for this question, and placed in Spenata's hands a list of debts and a calculation for three years expenditure. The Archbishop looked

it carefully over and cast up the amount to test its accuracy.

"This is a large amount, Caius," continued Spenata, "but you have been open in your statement and I will assume that it is correct. Yet, as you must have been extravagant in times gone by, I must not entrust these large sums under your own control. I have, however, an agent at Constantinople and another at Rome, and will give you letters of instruction to them to settle these debts and also make you regular payments for your personal expenditure. Is there any other matter requiring to be discussed?"

"Yes," answered Caius, "I require to know that at the expiration of the three years I may return to Savelona whether the Queen and King Pinto are married or not, as that arrangement rests with you only and I cannot influence it in any way, except to watch the Duke, and this I have undertaken to do. I also require you to direct that a royal ship be placed at my disposal, along with a staff of rowers and soldiers, to follow the Duke, if need be, and, on the expiration of the three years, to return here, and that a post in connection with the crown be assigned to me, and also that I may bring my wife with me if I so desire."

The Archbishop looked upon the Roman with surprise and, with cutting sarcasm, said:

"A modest request, truly, Caius! When you are about it, why not ask for half the kingdom, or the whole crown! However, if you watch over the Duke and prevent his return for three years, you shall have all you stipulate, and if Costanza marry Pinto earlier, then you

can return at once, and I will secure you a good post here or in Sepania."

Thus the two conspirators hatched their plot to defeat the course of true love between the Duke and the Queen but there was a listener that they knew not of. This was the physician, Huesca.

He was proceeding, by other private ways, to Spenata's room, and, hearing voices, waited until the interview was nearly over, when he quietly retired by the way he had come.

"And is it thus," he mused, "that this noble young life is to be wrecked! If she is forced to marry Pinto she will languish and die an early death, or else go mad. I am the servant of the Queen, and it is my duty to save her from this fate, and I will do so. Let me think. Let me think."

And he saw but one way to defeat the plot laid out for her, and that was that she should marry the Duke before he started for the Roman Empire. He knew how deeply they loved each other, and that the Duke was proceeding to Constantinople at the Queen's request. He could not see his way to approve of the Queen accompanying him, even if that could have been arranged, neither could he venture to recommend that they should at once set the Archbishop at defiance by an open marriage. Time was required and diplomacy as well, and perhaps, when Spenata knew that the union was irrevocable, he would cease to persecute his daughter.

Thus reasoned the kind-hearted physician. He had been much drawn to Costanza during her illness, and guessed how she had been deceived at the masked ball, and felt assured that unless there was the barrier of mar-

riage between her and the Duke, her father would force his daughter to the union with Pinto.

Having come to this conclusion he sought the Duke at once before Caius could return to the inn, and explained fully the position of matters, and also revealed to the astonished young man the cause of the Queen's illness, and the deception that had been practiced upon the Queen.

"Alas, Huesca," said the Duke, "how can this wrong be put right. I was reluctant to leave Costanza alone before I heard this, but now it seems my duty to stay near her."

"And what good would that do?" inquired the physician. "You little know Spenata if you think for a moment that he would hesitate to imprison or even murder you if you stood in the way of his ambition. I have watched him long and know him to be unprincipled."

"I am not afraid for myself," replied the Duke. "The question is, what is the best for Costanza?"

And as the young Parsee could not think of any other plan, Huesca mentioned his own, and added:

"I should hope that when her father knows of the barrier to the marriage with the King of Sepania he will acquiesce in the matter and receive you here."

"Yes," answered the Duke, "and by that time I shall have returned with Ivena to Savelona, and then my beloved wife can go with me to my own home."

And here the young man narrated the Queen's wishes as to Ivena resuming the crown, and that Costanza should go into retirement. The physician thought for a few moments, and then said:

"Yes, Queen Costanza is of that highly nervous and

sensitive temperament and delicate health that it will be the best for her to resign the crown, and to this her father will assent if Ivena returns and he cannot marry Costanza to King Pinto."

It was therefore arranged that the physician should go to the royal patient, while the Duke sought Bishop Angelus.

Huesca found the Queen and Monica together, watched over by Maria. Now it was necessary either to get the maid away or take her into their confidence, but before adopting anything respecting her, an interview between the Duke and Queen was desirable.

"And how is your royal charge, Maria?" inquired the physician. "I trust the last interview between her and the Duke has not left any unpleasant symptoms."

"No," answered the maid, "the Queen has been more cheerful and her friend Monica is to bear her company on this the last night of the Bishop's stay in Sordello."

"Will you inform the Queen of my visit, Maria," said the physician, "and perhaps Monica will come and converse with you for a few moments while I see the patient."

While Maria went to speak to the Queen, the physician placed in the goblet, which stood on the table near where Maria had been seated, a few drops of the liquid from a small horn which he took from his pocket.

"Now," he said in a low voice, "if she drinks this it will make her sleep soundly until the sun is high in the heavens to-morrow, and to make sure, I had better see that she takes it at once."

Therefore, when the maid returned with Monica, he inquired for some water, and, as Maria left the

room to bring some, he informed Monica that it was necessary for the Duke to see the Queen, and for that purpose he had put a sleeping draught into the goblet, and she was to see that Maria drank it.

"I will take the water to the Queen," said the physician, taking the pitcher from Maria, "and leave you and Monica alone for a few moments. But where is Hypathia, Maria?"

"She has obtained a holiday for a few days," answered the maid, "on account of her sister's illness, and is not expected to return until later in the week."

Huesca, thus finding that he had only to deal with Maria, left her to be observed by Monica, and he passed forward into the ante-room of the Queen. He told her that it was necessary for the Duke to see her again before he left Sordello. A word was sufficient, and her face lighted up with joy.

"And may I bring him to you at once?" inquired Huesca. "But you must calm yourself as he has much to say to you and little time to do it in."

"Oh, bring him to me at once, good Huesca," exclaimed Costanza. "I do not know how I can ever part with him again. Let him come and I will wait for him here."

The physician returned to the room where he had left Monica and the maid, and found that Maria was already showing signs of drowsiness. He, therefore, simply said:

"Lock this door after me, Monica, and see that no one approaches the Queen until morning. In fact you had better not open the door but retire to the ante-room of the Queen."

And as he spoke, he saw Maria's head slowly sink to the pillow on the couch on which she had seated herself and knew she was safe for several hours.

As he left the room he motioned to Monica to lock the door and take the key into her own care. He had not proceeded more than a step or two when he came face to face with the Archbishop.

"And how have you left your patient?" inquired Spenata. "Has the interview with that Parsee fatigued her very much? I am glad it is over, and I will take care that he sees her no more."

"The Queen is quite composed," replied Huesca, "and I have left her for the night, and desired that the door be locked and not opened for any one until late to-morrow. The Queen must be kept perfectly free from any disturbing subjects for a long time to come, I assure your grace."

"Ah, well," answered Spenata, "then I had better not go to her rooms to-night. I can see her to-morrow."

And he turned away from the door leading to the Queen's apartments conversing with Huesca.

"I suppose Maria is with the Queen?" inquired the Archbishop. "It is most annoying that Hypathia should be absent just now when she is wanted the most. But I will not detain you, Huesca, as you must be weary and require repose like the rest of the mortals."

And Spenata bade the physician good-night and they parted. The former to dwell upon his plans for joining the hands and kingdoms of his daughter and King Pinto and the best means and mode of approaching the matter, and Huesca to find the Duke.

"I am glad that all impediments are now removed from my path," said Spenata. "I did not expect to

get rid of that aspiring Parsee so easily. The Queen little knows how she is playing into my hands. Fancy, my allowing Ivena to resume her power here! No; I have got them all away now, and I will take care to keep them away until Costanza and Pinto are firmly seated on the joint thrones of Savelona and Sepania. I must communicate with Martel to keep his eye on this young Roman, Caius, and keep me informed of his movements. I will defeat them all yet and have my own way. I never fail."

Thus thought the Archbishop in the dark, and believing all was in safety for the night, he retired to his chamber, and was soon in a sound sleep.

Huesca hastened to join the Duke and Angelus at the place appointed. They were waiting for him, and the Parsee eagerly inquired if the Queen was prepared to see him.

"Yes; come with me," replied the physician, and taking them by a secret way, he led them into the room where he had left Monica and Maria. He found the maid in a heavy sleep, and motioning the Bishop to a seat, accompanied the Duke into the Queen's anteroom.

"Monica," said Huesca, "you had better come with me to Angelus who is in the adjoining room," and addressing the Duke, he said: "Let your communications and arrangements be as speedy as possible for time is most precious."

And having thus spoken, the physician and Monica returned to Angelus, and left the Queen and Duke alone.

The young man took her into his arms and kissed the

Queen passionately, and she, without coyness, returned his embraces:

“My love,” he said, “I little thought to have seen you again until after my voyage to Constantinople. I did not know, Costanza, how grossly you had been deceived at the masked ball, but the good physician has told me all. And he has also informed me how your father plans to unite your hand to King Pinto.”

The Duke quickly placed before the Queen the mode of deception practiced by her father and Caius, and the object to be achieved by getting the Duke away from Savelona.

“And has my father done this?” said the Queen. “I thought it must be a dream, for I knew, my love, that you would never abandon me and then laugh as Caius did. Yet, at first, it was such a fearful shock that I fainted and was very ill and nearly lost my senses. But seeing you, my love, and the sweet company of Monica, has restored me entirely. And now, what is to be done? Must you still leave me, Bismantua? Oh, what shall I do without you?”

The Duke then explained the necessity for a secret marriage, and that he believed this was the only course to prevent the contemplated union with King Pinto.

“Never will I be the wife of any one except you,” said the Queen, looking upon the Duke with a glance of deep love.

He pressed her to his heart and kissed her passionately, assuring her that she was his first and only love, and then he said:

“And can you trust me with yourself now? Costanza.”

“Yes,” answered the Queen, “you are my love, my life, my all! I am yours, and you are mine forever.”

“Come then, Costanza, and Bishop Angelus shall unite us solemnly in that sweet union which nothing can ever sever. Come, my love!”

And he was leading the Queen into the adjoining room, when the physician, hearing their movements, approached them, and said:

“And is it to be, your Majesty?”

The Duke answered for the Queen, and Monica and the Bishop came to them in the ante-room.

The Bishop joining the hands of the Duke and Queen, went through the ceremony similar to that narrated on the marriage of Harlez and Plenena, and then, saying a benediction over them, pronounced them man and wife.

This ceremony over, the Bishop and physician left the lovers together, with Monica to keep watch over Maria, who was still in a deep sleep. But, before doing so, Huesca gave the Duke a key to the private way, saying:

“Be not too long, Bismantua, in making your farewell for time flies more quickly than one thinks when young lovers are together.”

Thus saying the Bishop and physician left by the way they had come, and Monica, reclining on the couch, gently slept, while the lovers conversed of many things.

But when the Duke spoke of leaving her, the Queen threw her arms around his neck in a loving embrace.

“I cannot part with you, my love,” she said. “My life would be one long sadness without your presence. Oh, how I have longed for your society while you have

been away. And now, if you leave me here alone, I shall pine away and die. No, Bismantua, I cannot part with you."

"And yet, my love," replied the Duke, Kissing her fondly, "you pressed me to go for your sister. And can you renounce your crown, your kingdon, your all for me, Costanza?"

"I should consider all well gone if I were always near you, my love, my husband," answered the Queen, glancing shyly at the Duke. "What would the crown and kingdom be worth now if my husband were not near? Before to-night, Bismantua, you might have deemed me forward thus to speak. But now we are but one, and we must live our lives together. Yes, my love, take me with you. Wherever you go, I will go. Where you live, there will your Costanza live."

The Duke pressed his wife closely to his heart. He felt that every throb drew them nearer together. He realized that they now were one, and, for weal or woe, assented to her going with him.

Then came the question of ways and means and arranging for a quick departure. The Duke had assisted in the preparation of the ship and knew fully as to the accommodation. It was necessary to call Monica to the conference.

"And is it possible, Costanza," said Monica, "that you are prepared to lay down your crown and kingdom for love of your husband?"

"Yes," replied the Queen, "my husband is worth more than all else. He will ever love and cherish me, while if I stay here there will be great discord and unhappiness. My father would never forgive me. He

would dissolve this sacred marriage and force me to the union with King Pinto. I go gladly, Monica, and ask your aid and kindly assistance."

Monica looked with a smile of pleasure upon the radiant countenance of the Queen, and assented gladly to aid the flight, saying:

"Let us then away ere the morning light reveals our going. You can share my cabin, Costanza, until we are far to sea, for perhaps Caius would otherwise be tempted to denounce you. If we get safely there, no one need know that you are in the ship, for I can supply you with food, and there you can remain until we are beyond pursuit."

The lovers looked their thanks, and the Queen prepared to leave at once, and she was quickly ready.

"Now Monica," said the Duke, "you take the Queen's hand and I will lead the way and notify if there be any danger."

Thus they proceeded along the secret passage and through the subterranean way until they reached the harbor of Sordello. Then, emerging into the open air, they found the sun just tipping the hill with glory. All was still, except the gentle washing of the waves on the sea-shore, and the soft breeze sighing through the trees.

Not a word was spoken, but the Duke, drawing a boat close to the shore, beckoned his companions to be seated. Then he rowed quickly to the ship and assisted his wife and Monica to reach the deck.

They found Orlando on the watch, but the Duke, placing his finger on his lips, led the women to Monica's cabin, and, desiring them to fasten the door from within, left them alone and returned to Orlando, and, in low

tones, explained to the young chief all that had taken place.

"I will aid you all in my power," answered Orlando, pressing the Duke's hand. "Oh, how glad Ivena will be to see her sister."

Thus the young chief's first thought was of giving joy to her he loved so deeply. Absence had not cooled his love, but it had grown stronger as the days rolled onward.

The Duke, having placed the women under Orlando's charge, hastened away to communicate with Angelus and hurry the departure ere the flight of the Queen was discovered. He felt certain that Huesca would provide that this should not take place until mid-day at the earliest, yet, time was of moment, and he walked quickly to the inn where he arrived just as the outer gates were opened for the day.

Ascertaining that Caius had not left his room, he knocked for admission, and on receiving a reply from within, replied:

"Come, Caius, prepare for immediate departure. I have just left Orlando on the ship, and all are ready to start, and the wind is favorable for embarking. I go to Angelus, and then shall return at once to the ship, and the anchor will be weighed ere the third watch."

Caius sprang from his couch, and opening the door, admitted the Duke to his apartment. Pompora looked closely and somewhat suspiciously upon the Parsee, but he failed to find any hesitation in the Duke starting with the others. Caius had formed an idea that at the last moment the Duke would be away from the ship, and the Roman felt it his duty to keep an eye upon the one he

was commissioned to watch. The Duke was equally desirous to keep Pompora's movements known, and, anticipating the Roman's reply, hastened to say:

"I will run to Angelus and hurry him to proceed to the ship, and then, if agreeable to you, I will return here, and we can go forth together. I will not be long away."

Thereupon, without waiting for any reply, the Duke passed quickly to Angelus and informed him of the position of matters, and the necessity for his immediately joining his wife on the ship. By this means the Duke was able to place Angelus in possession of the true state of the case without taking Caius into his confidence.

The Duke, on again reaching the inn, found Caius prepared to start for the ship, and they left together for the harbor, and Orlando soon after weighed anchor, and Marcel and his party sailed onward for Constantinople.

About noon, the Archbishop, walking in the gardens, met Huesca, and, accosting the physician, inquired as to the Queen's health.

"I have not seen her this morning, your grace," answered the physician. "But when I left her last evening she was greatly improved, so much so that it only requires a continued stay here for a few months and perfect quiet to fully restore her Majesty to her usual health and strength.

"It is of the first importance, your grace, that her Majesty should have no subject mentioned to her that would tend to disturb her mind."

"I have nothing to say to her," replied her father, "that should agitate or interfere with her recovery; and now that Parsee has gone, for I hear Marcel and his party

sailed this morning, the Queen will no doubt listen to my proposal for an alliance with the King of Sepania."

"It is of the first importance," replied Huesca, "that this matter should not be mentioned to her for several months. It is my duty, your grace, to speak plainly on this subject, for I have studied her case thoroughly, and it was the fear of it that brought on the Queen's illness."

"Huesca," replied Spenata, "you have long enjoyed the confidence of the court and your opinion is worthy of my best consideration, but there are times in the history of kingdoms when even the advice of physicians must give place to the welfare of the State. And, now, unless the Queen looks favorable upon King Pinto's suit, I fear we shall have war. This will not publicly appear as the cause, for there are several matters of territory requiring adjustment, and these will be made the excuse, and we are scarcely prepared to meet the Sepanians in the field at present. Therefore, good Huesca, get the Queen well as soon as possible. But I will accompany you to the Queen's apartments and we can inquire after her health together."

And the two aged men left the gardens and proceeded to the chamber of the Queen. Huesca knocked for admission but there was no reply. He tried the door but it was bolted within.

"Knock louder," said Spenata. "they are sleeping."

"Would it not be well, your grace," replied the physician, "to come later on? I gave Maria strict instructions to keep her Majesty perfectly quiet until mid-day and admit no one as long as the Queen slept. And if she sleeps it is far better medicine than I can give."

"That is all very well," replied Spenata, "but I have

to proceed to Savelona to-day on affairs of State and require to see the Queen before I depart. Therefore, knock again, or allow me to do so."

Thereupon the Archbishop knocked louder than before and shook the door, and presently they heard footsteps approaching, and Maria opened the door and stood before them, looking as though she had but just awoke, and this was the fact.

The room was in gloom, the heavy tapestry being drawn across the window, and the torches well burnt out.

"What means this gloom, Maria?" said the Archbishop. "Do you not know it is past mid-day?" How is the Queen to-day?"

"The Queen must be sleeping," answered Maria, "as I have not been summoned to attend her Majesty."

"If she has slept as soundly as you have, Maria," said the physician, "it is worth many doses of my bitter medicines. Has anyone disturbed the Queen since I left last night?"

"No," answered Maria, "I bolted the door as you went out and it has never been opened since. In fact it only appears a few moments since you left us, and I had no idea that it was so late."

"Well," said the Archbishop, "go to the Queen and inform her that I and Huesca desire to see her for a few moments."

The maid passed through into the Queen's ante-room and knocked gently at the door of her Majesty's sleeping-room, but, receiving no reply, returned to Spenata and Huesca, and addressing the physician, said:

"Her Majesty is evidently sleeping as she gives no re-

ply to my knock. As you desired her not to be disturbed, I have returned before knocking louder."

"I think, your grace," said the physician, looking towards the Archbishop, "that as her Majesty sleeps it would be well to delay disturbing her until the moment you are starting for Savelona."

A dark frown came over the face of Spenata for he was not accustomed to have his will crossed nor directions made to him, but, feeling that the physician was within his rights, he assented gloomily, and added:

"I start for Savelona as the sun sinks to rest and will meet you here, Huesca, at that hour. But," he continued, turning to Maria, "if the Queen awakes earlier and appears in good health send a messenger for me and I will come alone and at once."

And the two men turned and left the room together, and as the Archbishop parted with the physician, he said:

"If you do not see the Queen before the sun goes down come to my private room, Huesca, and we will go together. I will not speak to her to-day about King Pinto, but leave her in your hands, and then, in a few weeks, I will return, and by that time you must get her quite well in health, and if you can say a few words to prepare her for our interview it might be well."

The physician made a suitable reply, but, by his manner, the Archbishop could see that Huesca dreaded the too early approach to any mention of the proposed alliance with King Pinto.

As Spenata walked away musing, he said:

"This good physician appears very careful of his royal patient. I will give her a few weeks yet to get strong,

and then I will send for King Pinto, and now the Parsee has gone, the alliance must come off, and all be as I wish."

At the time appointed, the court physician attended Spenata and they proceeded together to the Queen's apartments. They found Maria there and she stated that the Queen still slept.

"But this is strange," said Spenata. "We must arouse her. Maria, go to the Queen's chamber and inform her Majesty that I must see her a few moments before starting for Savelona, and my chariot awaits me now."

Maria hastened to the Queen's chamber, but received no reply to her repeated knocking.

"'Tis strange," mused the maid, "the Queen never slept like this. I will venture to open the door."

And on doing so, was surprised to find the room empty. She screamed and hurried back to the physician and Spenata, hurriedly exclaiming:

"The Queen is not there, Oh, where is the Queen!"

And tears flowed freely and she sank upon the couch.

Both men exclaimed, "Not there!" And Huesca added:

"Surely you are mistaken, Maria. The Queen was there when I left her last night and I told you to admit no one, and your door was bolted when we came this morning. Have you not seen her Majesty all day?"

"No," replied Maria, "and no one has called. You said I was to let the Queen sleep, and I did not disturb her."

"No," replied Spenata, with a sneer, "she was not there, so you could not disturb her. But I must go to

her chamber and see if there is anything to explain. Come with me, Maria, I may require you."

And Spenata dragged the maid with him to the bedroom of the Queen, and Huesca followed wondering what had become of her Majesty.

When Spenata had looked through all the rooms and found that the Queen had really fled, he was beside himself with rage. He upbraided the physician and the maid. He vowed vengeance against all who aided in the flight. He touched the cord of communication with the rest of the palace, and the alarm rang out a summons for the men-at-arms, and they were quickly in attendance in the passage awaiting the Archbishop's commands.

"And now, Huesca and Maria," said Spenata, in loud and threatening tones, "before I give you in charge will you reveal the whereabouts of the Queen? You are the only ones having access to her Majesty since yesterday, and must know what has become of her."

The only reply from the maid was a flood of tears; but Huesca, drawing himself to his full height, answered the Archbishop clearly and without faltering:

"I know nothing of the Queen's flight, your grace. I left her in better health and spirits than I had seen her for weeks, and I fully believed that her Majesty was here until this moment."

"I know where she must have gone," angrily spoke Spenata, "with those Roman fellows and that upstart Parsee, and you have assisted in the flight, Huesca."

This idea suggested to the physician a way of accounting for the Queen's absence which had not previously occurred to him, and, knowing of the marriage, it ap-

peared not unnatural that this course should have been taken, especially as he knew that the crown sat heavily on the Queen's brow; Huesca, however, calmly replied:

"It may be as you suggest, your grace, but if so I know nothing of the project, neither did I assist in any way. And now as to your course of conduct. You may lock this maid and myself in prison, and proclaim to all Savelona the Queen's flight, and bring King Pinto down upon you with his army, but this will not bring back the Queen, and may endanger your power, and bring about many things of which you little dream, in your present excited state of mind."

Spenata was greatly enraged and walked about the room threatening dire vengeance on all concerned, but this calm reasoning brought the Archbishop somewhat to his senses. Not all at once but little by little his cunning mind worked out the programme. Yet he did not deem it policy to appear convinced all at once. He continued to threaten and storm, but it was in a milder form and gradually he lowered his tones and argued with the physician.

"And what course have you to suggest, Huesca," exclaimed Spenata, "to save your own head and that of the maid here who must have been an accomplice in the plot?"

"There is no question with me as to being an accomplice," answered the physician. "And I also believe that Maria is quite free from any such accusation."

"I thank you, noble Huesca," exclaimed the maid, "for this statement, and I assure you that I fully believed the Queen was in her chamber until just now."

And here she wept again, and the physician continued:

"I believe you Maria." Then, turning to Spenata, he said:

"I am a close observer of character and I would vouch that this maid is no party in any way to the Queen's disappearance, and you may fully trust her and me. Now, your grace, your best course appears to leave it as though nothing had occurred. Allow Maria, and Hypathia on her return, to take charge of these rooms as though the Queen were here, and I will come daily as heretofore. You were about to go to Savelona and leave your daughter at Sordello for rest and quiet. Let this remain the impression still, and then perhaps matters will right themselves. The men-at-arms may have been called hither as your escort. This shall be so, Maria, shall it not?"

"The Archbishop may fully rely on me," answered Maria, drying up her tears and looking with thankfulness on Huesca. "And so I am sure he may on Hypathia, for she is devoted to your grace," added the maid, looking closely on Spenata.

The Archbishop stopped in his pacing across the room and looked fixedly upon the physician and the maid. The scrutiny and reflection appeared to satisfy him, and he was about to reply when Hypathia walked leisurely into the room.

Her face was deeply sorrowful, and signs of tears were in her eyes, and all could see that she was borne down with grief. She seated herself on the first couch that presented, and waited until the conversation was closed for she saw that something important had taken place.

"Well, Hypathia," said Spenata, looking upon the sorrowful face of the maid, "we have sad news to tell

you, but you appear sorrowful as though something greatly troubled you. What has occurred?"

Thus addressed, the maid looked up to the Archbishop, and with tears coursing down her cheeks, replied:

"I have lost my sister, your grace, and she was very dear to me. I should not have returned so soon, but feared the Queen might require my services."

"The Queen is not here, Hypathia," said Spenata.

"Not here!" exclaimed the maid. "Has she returned to Savelona? If so, I trust her Majesty is better."

There was the genuine ring of truth in the tones of Hypathia, and the Archbishop acquitted his favorite of any complicity in the Queen's absence. He, therefore, explained to her the position of matters and the suggestion of Huesca.

"But" added Spenata, "I have thought of a better plan than that of the physician's and I know, Hypathia, I can rely on your aid and secrecy."

Spenata then explained his plan. It was, that Hypathia should be disguised as Costanza and be accompanied by Maria, and that one of the royal ships should pursue Marcel and his party with all speed, Huesca accompanying as court physician.

"You have only to give out that the Queen required a sea-voyage, Huesca," said Spenata, "and, by my faith, she has taken one with or without your orders, good physician," sneeringly continued the Archbishop, "and Maria can be the maid to accompany the Queen, and Hypathia can still be with her relative. Are you all agreeable?"

Under the circumstances, and having regard to the fact that the men-at-arms were close at hand to make the

arrest if necessary, this appeared a superfluous question. But Spenata made it with his usual sneering expression when he knew his power and intended to use it in case of need.

The three persons addressed expressed their readiness to start on the proposed chase after the fugitive Queen, and Spenata, calling in the captain of the soldiers, gave his orders accordingly, and they were not long before all embarked, Hypathia going in disguise as the Queen of Savelona, accompanied by her maid, Maria, and by the court physician, Huesca, and Spenata made haste to the capital of the kingdom.





BENONI AND MONA. See p. 345.

## CHAPTER XXI.

AS ONE RISEN FROM THE DEAD—THE THREE HOLY  
ONES IDENTIFIED.

While these matters were proceeding in Savelona, Benoni was renewing his acquaintances in Constantinople. He was received as one risen from the dead, for all deemed him to have perished in the shipwreck, along with his wife.

“And you left Serapta well?” inquired Mona. “And saw you ought of Marcel and his party, Benoni?”

“Your sister was in excellent health,” replied the Prince, “and sent her warmest love, but I saw nothing of Marcel, nor any one from these parts, except the missionary, Angelus.”

And then Benoni related the adventure on the Rock of Sacrifice and the appearance of the three holy ones.

“And did you really believe that these were, Enoch, Moses and Elijah?” inquired Mona.

“If I did not, Mona,” replied the Prince, “the soldiers did, and it was very fortunate for both the missionary and myself that they received that impression, for otherwise you would never have seen me here.”

“And what then would have become of Serapta?” inquired the kind-hearted girl. And what may become of her now?” she added, in tones of troubled inquiry.

“We must hope for the best, dear Mona,” answered the Prince. “Her presence on the Sacred Island was not revealed to any one.”

“Then Marcel would not hear of her?” inquired Mona. “Alas, I fear they may not find her after all.”

“I shall return as soon as I can charter a ship,” said

the Prince, "and bring her to you, Mona, for she is very dear to me."

And Benoni ceased to speak, for his mind went forth to her he loved so deeply, and he lived over again the happy hours they had passed together on the Sacred Island.

But his reflections were interrupted by a messenger from the harbor of Constantinople, bringing him a communication from Queen Ivena:

"I desire to see you at once. Come to me without disclosing anything about our voyage together. An early interview is most important to me.

"IVENA."

This request perplexed him greatly.

"Surely," he mused, "the Queen is not about to repeat the love scenes of the past. No, now she knows I am married and dearly love my wife, she would never attempt another painful scene like the last."

And then aloud he said to the messenger:

"I will accompany you at once." And speaking to Mona to excuse him, Benoni and the messenger departed quickly to the harbor.

Ivena received him courteously, but there was a tell-tale blush upon her cheek, for she had not forgotten their parting and the previous love scene.

"How can I thank you, noble Prince," she said, "for so speedily responding to my wish and coming to me. I have used a woman's privilege and changed my mind. Captain Andrius appeared amused when I gave my commands to return here as though he had expected such directions. You men appear to read us poor women better than we do you."

"Nay," answered the Prince, "the general opinion is the other way, and that your sex read us better than we

understand you. But," he continued, with a cordial smile, "I trust you have come to make a stay with us in Constantinople, for all my friends will indeed be glad to welcome you here."

"You will think me very strange, Prince Benoni," answered the Queen, with a rising color in her cheeks, "but I felt very lonely and miserable when you had left, and the world appeared so drear, and life not worth living unless I could meet with kindred souls. And where shall I find them, I said to myself, if not with Prince Benoni's friends? And so I have come to be a burden on you for some time, and to see this new and magnificent city."

"Welcome Queen to our home," gallantly answered the Prince. "Come with me now, and I will take you to my mother, and she will receive you as a daughter."

"But you have not told anyone of my folly?" inquired the Queen. "And yet why call it folly? I shall never regret my love for you, Benoni, for it has purified my thoughts, and raised mankind higher than if I had never disclosed my hopeless passion."

"And, by and by, noble Queen," answered the Prince, "there will be a Savelonian, of equal worth, who will search you out and lay his deep love at your feet, and then you will not refuse his long years of devotion, but give him the warmest affection of your heart."

And Benoni noticed that the color mounted to the Queen's cheeks, and she cast down her eyes beneath his gaze, and changing the conversation said:

"I am ready, Prince Benoni, to accompany you to your mother, and long to find in her a kindred spirit, and am sure I shall love her."

The Prince assisted the Queen from the ship, and pressed her hand in response, assuring her that his mother would indeed receive her with pleasure for the great service she had rendered in providing him with a place in the royal ship.

"And Mona, too," said Benoni, "my wife's sister, will also welcome you to Constantinople. We were conversing on my adventures when your messenger arrived, but, as you desired me not to mention your arrival until we met, I have not explained that I came to see you."

"And they will not think it strange I hope," inquired Ivena "that we came together, and nearly alone, in the ship. To me it was quite natural under the circumstances, and in any event could not have been avoided. In fact, if it were to be done over again I would do it. But I wonder how poor little Costanza is going on? She was always too gentle for a queen."

And Ivena allowed her thoughts to pass to Savelona and dwell on the love of the gentle and pure girl she had left behind.

She also thought of her Chief, Durana, and from him she passed on to Orlando, and then the color rose to her face, and she looked upon him with her mental sight now quickened to his worth.

"And you found your friends well?" inquired Ivena.  
"How delighted all must have been to see you."

"Yea, truly," replied the Prince. "I was indeed welcomed. And I have found many things changed during my stay on the Sacred Island. I left the Roman Empire undergoing one of those phases of national life which appears inevitable until truth is discovered or revealed. And now, in the beautiful city, you will see

traces of the old pagan faith side by side with the new idolatry."

"But," hastily replied Ivena. "I thought the Romans were now Christians? Surely you do not call Christians idolators?"

"Christianity, Ivena," sadly replied the Prince, "is only a refined and highly spiritualized idolatry. The decrees of the Roman Councils, taking the place of the orders of the Senate, have declared Jesus of Nazareth a God, and men bow down and worship Him as they used to worship Horus and Mithra and Zeus."

"Then is not Jesus of Nazareth the very God incarnate?" inquired Ivena. "Methought the missionary, Angelus, declared He came down from Heaven, mixed with men on earth, was murdered, and then, of his own power, raised Himself from the dead, and ascended back to Heaven. Is not all this true, Benoni?"

"It is true the Roman priests say all this," answered Benoni, "but it is not true in fact, and there is no evidence to support the assertions. Even the very date of the birth of Jesus is not known. But the Church here have now fixed it on the twenty-fifth of December."

"But why fix it on that day, Benoni," inquired the Queen, "if the actual time is not known?"

"Because," answered the Prince, "that day has become sacred to the people by usage and custom. On this day Horus, Mithra, Krishna, Thaumus, and Heracles were born, and last, though not least, Jesus of Nazareth has been decreed to have been born on the same day."

"But surely," inquired the Queen, "such a highly civilized nation as the Romans would detect and expose the fallacy."

"There are many reasons why this should not be," answered the Prince. "Amongst others, the Emperor has made Christianity the State religion, and laws have been passed to compel men to receive the decrees of the Councils of the Church. Besides this, the majority of Romans do not care anything about religion. They live but in the present, and let the past and the future take care of themselves."

"And a very good practice, too," answered Ivena. "Why should men trouble themselves about myths and legends? Why should they go searching into the past, or endeavoring to gaze into the future? The present only is the time of which we are certain."

"But," answered the Prince, "all minds cannot rest satisfied with this position. If they see mankind believing in myths and legends, unsupported by proofs, and bowing down in idolatry to a man, however spiritualized, as a god, they must express themselves, and endeavor to convince their fellows that this is but another form of idolatry."

"What then, Benoni." inquired the Queen, "would you have us do? If we have parted with Horus, Mithra, Krishna, Thaumus, Heracles, Jupiter, Zeus, and other gods, why should we not have this Jesus of Nazareth to take their places? Surely his doctrines savor more of Heaven than these dethroned deities?"

"Yes, Ivena," answered the Prince, who looked upon the Queen with deep interest, "His doctrines are more beautiful than the ancient myths and traditions. But He has retained hell in His belief, and so dreadful that even a drop of water is denied, and God is made less compassionate than man. Besides, His resurrection is

unproven, and His descent from Heaven only tallies with all the previous myths, and His ascension is a statement of His followers only."

"But the miracles," continued Ivena, "surely they shew that Christ was God?"

"All religions must have miracles and marvellous manifestations," answered Benoni, "otherwise men would not receive them. Thus, when Guitama made himself incarnate, light appeared throughout the world, and the reign of peace on earth began, and as he walked abroad, and entered on his heavenly mission as the saviour of the world the blind received their sight, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, the crooked became straight, and the veils of sin and ignorance were banished from the world, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. We smile at these myths, and yet this highly civilized Roman world bows down to a second Buddha."

"Then, Benoni," inquired Ivena, "are you a Buddhist?"

"No, Ivena," replied the Prince, smiling. "I am not a believer in any god incarnate in the flesh."

"What then are you, Benoni?" asked the Queen, looking towards the Prince with expectation and waiting anxiously for his reply.

"I am a follower of the great Zoroaster," answered the Prince. "And I believe in the high philosophy of Solomon and the noble expressions of Micah, the ancient seer of the Hebrews."

"Why then surely, Benoni," said the Queen, "your religion must be greatly mixed if you draw it from so many different sources?"

"These all run into one beautiful, peaceful stream,"

answered the Prince." "My noble ancestor, Zoroaster, said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they only see God;' Solomon said, 'Fear God, and keep His Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;' and Micah, looking around upon the foolish sacrifices of the first-born of men, the slaughtered cattle, and the effusion of blood, exclaimed, 'And what doth the Lord require of thee, O, man, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before thy God?'"

"What then, Benoni," inquired the Queen, "is your Church called, for I presume your faith has a name?"

"It is called the Church of God," solemnly answered the Prince, "and it admits the truthful and sincere of all religions. It is the only Church which casts out fear, and looks upon the Creator as a Friend and Father to all the creatures He has formed."

"And have you no fear of death, Benoni?" inquired Ivena.

"None whatever, Ivena," answered Benoni, smiling with conscious thought of the God he loved. "True, I know not His object and purpose in sending me into the world; that He has not yet revealed. But I can trust Him where I cannot see His plan and design; and I believe He, the great and glorious One, will never do me any harm."

"And, Benoni, do you believe in the immortality of the soul?" anxiously asked the Queen, looking yearningly upon the Prince, as though she would penetrate his inward thoughts.

"I believe," answered Benoni, "with Solomon, the Wise, that the body returns to the earth, but that the spirit returns to the God who gave it."

"Yes," answered the Queen, "the Buddhists believe that the spirit is merged ultimately into Deity. But surely this idea does not satisfy the human aspirations? We desire to retain our individuality; to know that in the next life we are the same Ego we are in this world. We trust to have the new surroundings higher and more beautiful and perfect; less risk and uncertainty; greater knowledge of the plans and designs of the Creator; in fact, we want to know the truth about ourselves and all things."

"And can the finite ever hope to grasp the infinite?" exclaimed the Prince. "And yet we must be part of God, or our aspirations would not reach forth to such immensity."

"I have often wondered," said the Queen, "that we are left so liable to all accidents and pain and illness. Could not the Creator have made us perfect, Benoni?"

"A heathen, Ivena," answered the Prince, "has said, 'As the god could not make us perfect, they gave us a little of themselves; and I believe the soul is this little perfect bit of Deity which survives through all eternity. If you ask me how and where, I answer I know not, but, as I believe the Creator is just, I also hope and trust that He will not leave me in the dust, but in His own good time and way let me see His great perfection. Truly, 'His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts;' and yet, man were an abortion and absurdity, if this life were all. Reason, the Creator's greatest gift, confirms this thought; and hope, the Creator's sweetest comfort, points to greater knowledge and higher life beyond the tomb; and in this hope I rest peacefully and trustfully, feeling assured, from my inner consciousness, that

if He awakens me from my sleep it will be for further progress and advancement in all things. But I fear I have wearied you with my converse; and here we are at the home of my father, the King of Kirma."

And the Prince led the Queen into the presence of his parents, and introduced her to King Harva and Queen Gartha, his wife's parents, and to his sister-in-law, the lovely Mona.

"Welcome, noble Queen," said the King of Kirma, to our home and this city of Constantinople, and we have to thank you for your hospitality to our son, and especially for bringing him in your ship to our shores."

"A mother thanks you, noble Queen," said Benoni's mother, "for all your kindness to one who is so dear to us all here assembled. We had grieved for him as lost to us forever in this life, and yet, at times, I fancied that I should live to see him once again ere yet I passed away to my rest. And now, noble Ivena, we thank you for giving him a place in your royal barge, and trust you will make your home with us during your stay in these parts."

And the parents of Serapta and Mona also thanked Queen Ivena for all her kindness, and she felt pleased that she had overcome her reluctance to visit the Prince's friends.

"Truly," said the Queen Ivena, "I require no thanks, nor deserve any. I have but received Prince Benoni in my palaces of Savelona and Sordello for a short time, and had the pleasure of his society on my barge during the voyage, and I am the debtor in thanks rather than the recipient, as the converse with the Prince has amply

repaid me for the slight exertions I have made on his behalf."

"It is kind of you, Queen Ivena," replied Benoni, "to put it in that way, but I should have found it very difficult to reach my friends if you had not aided me with your money and your ship. But here comes the Emperor, Constantine, that I have named to you, Ivena."

And as the Prince spoke, a man of fine, majestic appearance, came into sight, walking slowly through the garden paths. On each side of him was a priest. One was an aged man, of solemn aspect; and, as they conversed, Constantine addressed him as Eusebius. The other was a much younger priest, and he was called Athanasius.

"And are we to have no end to these disputes on minor points of doctrine?" said Constantine. "I am weary of this war of words and straw-splitting. When I got your man, Jesus, made a God and bought you so many followers, surely that ought to have been enough; and now, in my declining years, I thought to have peace. But, alas, yours is a religion of discord and constant squabbling amongst yourselves; and if you cannot agree between yourselves, how can you expect to have a peaceful spiritual kingdom?"

"Our Master," replied Athanasius, "came not to bring peace on earth until sin is fully exterminated. He distinctly said that He came to set a father against his son, and a son against his father, and brother against brother, and a daughter against her mother-in-law."

"He need not have come," jocularly answered Constantine, "to set a daughter against her mother-in-law,

for that happened long before He appeared on the scene, and still continues notwithstanding all the vaunted powers of Christian love. But referring to this new idea, that there is no chance of salvation in the next world. Why bother about defining the powers of your Saviour? I am weary of all these nice distinctions. Plato believed there was another chance for all, except those guilty of the unpardonable sin. But in these days you would have it that after death there is no prospect of another probation; once lost, then lost forever. Let us go back to Plato, and give the damned some hope."

"Our noble Church," answered Eusebius, "give all a chance to get out of purgatory, hence prayers for the dead. It is only the heretics who say that there is no purgatory, but that as the tree falls so it must lie forever. And as to the unpardonable sin, no one knows or can understand what that is, for Jesus did not explain it."

"Why then," said Constantine, "Plato was greater than his Lord, for he defined his unpardonable sin."

"And what was that, noble Emperor?" inquired Athanasius, who either was, or pretended to be in ignorance of Plato's belief on the subject.

"Plato's unpardonable sin," answered Constantine, "was when persons placed in high and sacred trusts abused their powers. These were sent to the nethermost hell and never came out any more. Ah, you priests, founders of a new faith, see that you do not commit this great sin? Lay open all the books which testify ought of the past three hundred years, and let the world at large themselves decide as to the truth of Christianity. Why do you suppress the writings of the great Romans? Where are the missing books of Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius and others? Are

you afraid they will not bear inspection ? Let search be made in the records of the Roman State. Surely these manifestations of Divinity will not be hid; the doings under Pilate; the resurrection from the dead; the ascension to Heaven. Where are the records establishing all these marvellous things ? Surly, before you bind the consciences of this great Roman world you will give proofs of the Divinity of Jesus; or else the time will come when all evidences are lost, and the burden of proof will be shifted from those upholding the faith to those refusing to receive it."

"Why trouble, noble Emperor," gently replied Eusebius, "about the past or future. This religion tends to good, and the end justifies the means."

"Nay, Eusebius," sorrowfully answered Constantine, "this has been the cry of professors of all the religions of the earth; but permanent good can never come out of evil. Either it is true that Jesus is God, or else we are setting up a new idolatry, and I do not care to be a party to a fraud."

"But, noble Emperor," said Athanasius, "how can you now change again the religion of the State. You were present at the Council of Nice, and endorsed the making of Jesus into Divinity; and now we are making the Holy Spirit into God, that is, a triad or Trinity of Godhead. This is the idea of all the ancient nations and pointed to the Christian Trinity of, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Not three Gods, but one God. Thus it ever has been, and is now, and ever will be."

"Yes," answered Constantine, "'tis but the ringing of the changes, and I deeply regret that I have been a cat's-paw to introduce this spiritual reign of priestly power,

but now," sorrowfully continued the Emperor, "it is too late to change. I already feel that my days are numbered and all I want is rest and peace. I must away to Nicomedia, or my own native land, and there I shall fall into my last sleep; and then I shall know the great mystery, hidden during all these ages."

The bishops looked wonderingly upon the Emperor, who seldom gave way to these gloomy expressions, and deemed it the best to forbear any reply; and Eusebius, noticing the group within the palace of the King of Kirma, called Constantine's attention to them.

"There, noble Emperor," said the Bishop, "you will find the dead, alive again, and the lost, found; for behold Benoni, in search of whom you despatched Marcel and party. There he sits amongst his kindred alive and well."

And Constantine looked upon the group and smiled, saying, as he entered the room:

"Welcome, Benoni, to this, our city: and whom have we accompanying you?" for the Emperor observed that the one near the Prince was a stranger, and he was always attracted by beauty, and Ivena looked most lovely, as she gazed with admiration upon the fine, manly form of Constantine, and thought of the great power he wielded over the Roman Empire.

"This, noble Emperor," replied Benoni, leading Ivena forward and presenting her to Constantine, "is Queen Ivena, from the Kingdom of Savelona, in the south of Africa. It is to her that I am indebted for the means of returning to my friends and the Roman Empire; and, by and by, noble Emperor, I have to petition a favor at your hands on behalf of the Queen."

“Consider it granted ere you ask it, Benoni,” replied Constantine, with a gracious smile.” I am ever ready to aid royalty, especially when coupled with beauty. And saw you ought of Marcel and friends? I was slightly the means of starting them on an expedition to search for you.”

“I saw them not, noble Emperor,” answered Benoni, “but thank you sincerely for your kindness in thinking of me.”

“And where is my kinswoman, Serapta? inquired Constantine. “Have you brought her back to those who loved her so greatly?”

The Prince explained the position of matters, and also the flight of Ivena, and the Emperor was greatly interested.

“Ah, noble Queen,” said Constantine, looking with deep interest on the blushing and agitated countenance of Ivena, “you must permit me to re-instate you on your throne. I am getting too old personally to lead the expedition, but I have thousands of young men who will be proud of the honor and distinction. And, Benoni, we must bring the Princess Serapta to her own land without delay. Ah, what a happy pair you must have been on that island alone together. I envy you, Benoni, far away from intrigue and strife, monarchs of all you surveyed. Would I could go and end my days in that sacred and secluded spot; and would that the holy ones would visit me and reveal the object and purpose of life, for the nearer I reach the end of the journey, the less I seem to know why I was started on it at all.”

And as the Emperor uttered these sentiments, a deep

sadness overspread his features, and Benoni looked on with deep sympathy, as he replied:

“ Noble Emperor, I thank thee on behalf of Queen Ivena and myself for your kind offer to re-instate her Majesty in her dominions and to restore my wife to her home, and may Heaven aid and promote both these purposes, and may the Great Creator reveal to you, noble Emperor, the object and purpose of our lives on earth. When your imperial Majesty can spare me a short time alone I would converse with you on these great themes.”

“ Let it be as you desire, Benoni,” answered the Emperor, “ for it will be a pleasure to hear the views of one who has been secluded from the din and strife of parties, and had the opportunity of conversing with his own mind and with his God. Thus in solitude have all great men been made. Thus was it with Moses, Zoroaster, Guitama, and Christ. And thus I doubt not it has been with you, Benoni.”

“ Nay,” said Eusebius, “ the truth is with the Church; it alone can reveal to man the things pertaining to the future world.”

“ And the Church alone,” said Athanasius, “ can explain to you, Benoni, the mysteries of Godliness. You must join our Church, and be baptized, and initiated into the mysteries of the holy faith.”

“ But, noble Athanasius,” replied the Prince, “ it is written, ‘ All shall be taught of God.’ ”

“ Yes,” quickly responded the young divine, “ but the teaching is through the Church alone. It is the conduit-pipe from Heaven to earth.”

“ Aye, Athanasius,” said the Emperor, “ and the stream of truth is sadly polluted by the pipes through

which it is conducted to us. But enough of divinity; tell me, Benoni, what you thought of the Savelonians? Surely they are almost Romans? The first settlers there were off-shoots from the great Roman State. They speak our language, do they not? And have many of our laws and customs?"

"They certainly speak the Roman tongue," replied Benoni. "But they have become a mixed race and I see many differences of a radical kind amongst them. They believe also they are descended from Nimrod, the ancient hunter."

"As well from him as from a wolf, eh, Benoni?" laughingly replied Constantine. "We need not be over-proud of our ancestry, for some of our philosophers, wise and learned, say we are descended from the apes, and in course of time have lost our tails. But some, more learned still, trace resemblance in the long-eared ones to the stubborn ass, and truly I think Christian Rome is likely to give forth a nearer approach to this despised animal."

"But," answered Eusebius, in the same jocular tone, "you must exclude the priests from your descriptions, noble Emperor,"

"Yea, truly, Eusebius," replied Constantine, "it was the Christian people I referred to. The priests are the leaders and are more cunning than stupid, present company, of course, excepted. But I must away: we have a Council meeting at mid-day, and now 'tis near noon."

Thus saying, the Emperor, with the priests, courteously saluted the company and took their departure; and Ivena, expressing the pleasure of meeting with the great

ruler of the Christian world, turned aside to converse with Benoni and friends.

"I have often wondered," said Ivena, "what the greatest man of the civilized world could be like and now I have seen him. And yet," she continued, a sadness stealing over her, "he has not discovered the object and purpose of our lives. He appears to know no more than the humblest peasant, and does not seem to be any happier. Alas, where art thou happiness to be found? One would have expected that Constantine, who has had one undeviating success, would have found this great treasure; but he still looks for it in solitude, far away from the scenes of his life and the arena where his glorious exploits have been achieved."

"Thus it ever is," answered the King of Kirma. "Happiness must proceed from within and the result of our own sincere efforts; for neither circumstances, nor riches, nor place, nor position, will insure it."





A MAN OF FINE, MAJESTIC APPEARANCE CAME INTO SIGHT. ON EACH SIDE  
WAS A PRIEST See p. 255.

## CHAPTER XXII.

CONSTANTINE, THE MATCHMAKER, CARRIES OUT HIS PLANS.

The Emperor did not forget his promise to Ivena and Benoni, but quickly got together a large force to proceed first to the Sacred Island to receive Serapta, who was still believed to be there with Monica; and this accomplished, to march forward to Savelona, and replace Ivena on the throne.

This expedition could not be kept from the ears of Captain Martel and Archbishop Akiba, who were now resident at Constantinople, as temporal and spiritual representatives of Christian Savelona.

The news of this army, proceeding for these purposes, greatly perplexed these two representatives, and they had to consider which side they would espouse. Captain Martel's love for the Queen inclined him to keep a discreet silence, but then he reasoned:

“These Romans are no doubt clever and able soldiers, but unless they are greatly assisted in Savelona their ability will be of no practical use. I know what I will do. I will keep right with both sides. It is my duty to report to Spenata everything that arises calculated to interfere with his plans. I will, therefore, send a special messenger and inform the Archbishop of Savelona what is decided upon by Constantine. And as to the Queen, I will again endeavor to press my suit, and if she regain her kingdom I shall still be all right.”

Thus reasoned and acted this subtle Savelonian, and Archbishop Akiba also determined to communicate with Spenata.

“It may not be part of my spiritual duties,” reasoned

Akiba, "to keep Spenata posted as to temporal affairs, but the importance to him and the new religion justifies my action. I will send a private messenger to Savelona and notify how matters are shaping. By this course I shall be prepared whether the father or daughter wins the day, for it will be a war of family and neither will give in if once the dogs of war be let loose, for truly the Queen is a 'chip off the old block,' woman though she be."

Thus it came about that, without communicating with each other, these two men sent each a special messenger to the Archbishop, Spenata, acquainting him with the war-like expedition.

But the Queen Ivena was not remiss when her mind was drawn out by the action of the Emperor towards her throne, ere Martel and Akiba could send their despatches, she had a long and private interview with Captain Andrius, who was enthusiastic in her behalf.

"Good Captain," said the Queen, "you can do me a great service, and I know you have my welfare at heart."

"Yea, truly, your Majesty," replied the honest servant of the crown, "there is nothing I would not do to serve you. You have but to command me and I will go to the ends of the earth with you."

The Queen smiled at his enthusiasm, as she replied:

"It is not that far I shall require you to go, Andrius. But the great Emperor Constantine is preparing a legion of soldiers to proceed to Savelona to aid me in recovering my crown, and I want you to be my trusty messenger to my friends there to prepare themselves for the coming of the Romans. We shall go by way of the Sacred Island,

and Durana had better be on the lookout in that direction. He is my oldest and most reliable chief, and if his son, Orlando, be in Savelona, you may trust the young man fully, for he is attached and well-disposed towards my reign."

And as the Queen uttered these words, the Captain saw a rosy hue overspread her face, and drew his own conclusions.

"I will take care, your Majesty," answerd the warrior, "to see that the young man is early notified, and I doubt not for his zeal in your service, and trust he will meet his full reward."

Again the Queen blushed, and touching her faithful servant on the arm, she said:

"Ah, Andrius, I fear you have seen my weakness, for I could not conceal from you what has taken place in your ship; but the Prince, Benoni, has one very near and dear to him, and this weakness has passed away, and I have known Orlando for many years, and he was ever as a brother to me."

"And may become something nearer," added the aged soldier, "for he is truly a noble and worthy man."

And the Queen gave her trusted servant messages to all upon whom she could rely, and sent him on his errand, and pressed him to make the greatest speed to Savelona.

It was the departure of the royal barge, and the rumors of the preparation of the Romans, that hastened Martel and Akiba to despatch their messenger; but the promptness of the Queen placed Captain Andrius several days in advance, and time was of great moment for her interests.

While the Roman soldiers were getting ready for the voyage, the Queen and Benoni took the opportunity of seeing the city of Constantinople. They were sometimes accompanied by the Emperor, who had taken a great fancy to Ivena, and was also disposed to be very courteous to Prince Benoni, whom he looked upon as connected by marriage to the Imperial House.

The Emperor often twitted the Queen as to the voyage from Savelona, with the Prince as her sole companion. But he did it so good-naturedly that Ivena could not take offence. She blushed greatly, and the far-seeing Constantine soon divined how matters had been with the Queen; but he had every confidence in Benoni, and from a few words dropped by the Prince, the Emperor saw there was a brother and sister attachment between the young chief, Orlando, and the Queen, which might soon grow into a warmer feeling.

"Ah, noble Queen," said Constantine, "we shall soon be having another delegate from Savelona, and methinks he will be more welcome than Captain Martel. I wish he would quickly arrive, for then he should have the charge of this expedition. It would indeed be with him a labor of love to restore you to your throne, and you could not refuse to let him kneel humbly at your feet when that was accomplished."

"If," answered the Queen, "you refer to Orlando, the son of my trusted Chief, Durana, you are quite correct that he would do anything for my welfare. He is indeed a kind, noble, and truthful man."

And as the Queen spake in honor of her many years' friend, the Emperor noticed the color gradually suffuse her face, and he changed the conversation.

"Ere you leave for Savelona, noble Queen," said Constantine, "you must visit my palace, for if ever you come to this city again I shall be away."

"Why, noble Emperor," answered the Queen, "do you leave this beautiful city, one you have designed and laid out with so much pains?" I understand your Imperial Majesty set out the metres and bounds, and stated where each noble structure was to be placed. And now you would leave it."

And a sadness sounded in the Queen's tones, as though regret was in her heart, and Constantine as sorrowfully replied:

"When I planned this noble city, fair Ivena, I was flushed with success. I had reached to the height of my ambition, and was master of the great Roman Empire, and began to imagine I was blessed and greatly favored by Deity. Therefore, in return for my worldly success, I determined to lay out this city of God, but I was not at heart a Christian. I held on to the old gods of Rome, while I raised to power the professors of the new faith. I refused to be baptized, and still offered sacrifices, and officiated as Pontiff to the old gods, and at the same time was proclaimed supreme head of the Christian religion. Thus I was a time-server, and policy ruled my action. And now, noble Queen," and here the Emperor's voice sounded very sad and regretful, "I am feeling deeply the results of my own conduct. I am but Emperor in name, the power has passed from me to the priests; they rule the land, and I am only a dummy-head and they turn me as they please. And, to make matters worse, I now discover that the resurrection of Christ never took place at all. It is a religious cry got

up to induce people to believe that the truth has been revealed, but we are yet in darkness, for, alas, Deity has not revealed Himself. Such at least is my opinion."

And as the Emperor uttered these views, his listeners saw deep grief and trouble come over his countenance. He had hoped to do good to the race of mankind, but realized that he had only introduced a new phase of error, more dangerous because more spiritualized.

Benoni looked upon Constantine with feelings of deep compassion. He felt the littleness of all human endeavors; and as he replied, it was in tones of sympathy with one who had desired to achieve a good, and found the result so widely different.

"Be not sad, noble Emperor," said the Prince, "nor weary with the thought that what you meant for good has turned out ill. Thus it often is with man's highest efforts; we put our hands to our purposes and expect to reap the fruits of our desires. But when the seed is sown it grows up in a different way to our expectations and we often find it bearing apples of discord instead of fruits of love and righteousness."

"Alas, Benoni," said Constantine, "I find discord and division where I looked only for love and peace and harmony. The highest in the Christian Church dispute and differ more than the priests of the old religion; and their differences are on the merest trifles. Fancy, some assert that the holy mother of Christ was born without the taint of original sin. Others, that Jesus had neither brother nor sister; whilst others say that Mary was always a virgin. And now the Church is directing prayers to be made to her, instead of the Great Creator and all these matters are angrily discussed as essential

points of Christian salvation. My life, Benoni, is made weary to me, and I long to fly away and be at rest."

"But, noble Emperor," said the Prince, "what would this great Empire do without your guiding hand? You have brought it to such unity and great perfection that you must retain the helm or the glorious vessel will get wrecked amid the rocks of dissent, and gross idolatry again pervade the land."

"And what will become of this great Empire when I die?" inquired Constantine. "Die I must, and, therefore, my going into retirement will only hasten the event by a few years; and I shall have peace and rest; and I am weary, Benoni."

Thus sadly spake the great Roman conqueror; but as they turned to gaze upon the new Church dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus, they saw a huge procession, led by young chorister-eunuchs, so made to preserve their purity of voice, followed by Bishops, Eusebius and Athanasius, and a large number of priests, in their full spiritual robes.

"This," bitterly said Constantine, "is the new foolery introduced to suit the common people and make them accept the new faith. There are the old trappings of religion; the white vestments, the old crosses worn from the time of the ancient Egyptians, the serpent, emblem of the fall and the wanderings in the wilderness. And there," pointing to the images of Jesus and the holy mother of Jesus, "are the new idols to which the people are to bow down and worship. Behold, Benoni and Ivena, how the ignorant horde prostrate themselves before the bishops and the images! These are the sights that now disgust me; formerly I believed, as my mother taught

me, that Christianity contained the truth, and that Jesus was the very God from Heaven. But now, alas, I know he was but mortal like ourselves, and we are still in the dark as to the future life."

"I came, noble Emperor," said Benoni, "to confer with you on this new religion. The holy ones hurried me from the Sacred Island with this mission to you, but I find you have yourself discovered that Christianity is not the truth from Heaven, but an invention of mankind."

"Yes, Benoni," said Constantine, "my reading and meditation, coupled with my research amongst the records of the past, shew me how these ideas have grown and gradually taken possession of the people. These records prove that the Child Jesus, 'when He was beside Himself,' and His mother and brethren went sorrowfully searching for Him, fancied He was the Jewish Messiah, sent to redeem His people from the Roman power. He lived a spotless life, and His deep study and seclusion rolled into Him all the beautiful and exalted thoughts of the past. Then, as He walked abroad, He spoke of high and Heavenly things, reflections of His long and early studies of the pure and good. But when He tried to reform the priesthood of His day, they rose against Him, and extinguished that bright and shining life; and in His agony He exclaimed, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' And He was laid in the tomb of Joseph, and, alas, he rose not again! All the records and history are silent on this stupendous event; and Christ is not risen from the dead, as the priests, without proof, assert; and I, Benoni, have been a party to a fraud by introducing this Christianity as the State religion of this great Empire. And, ere long, it will have

so taken possession of the common people that all who refuse to believe in the Divinity of Christ will be burnt as heretics; and I, Benoni, shall be the cause of their deaths."

"Be not sad nor sorrowful, noble Emperor," said the Prince. "You but acted according to your light, and we never know the full force our actions upon others. The Creator permits these errors now, but there will come light and then men will pass by these myths, and worship the Great Creator."

"And is it He that the Parsees worship?" inquired Constantine. "Our priests accuse your people of worshipping the sun."

"In the sun, noble Emperor," answered the Prince, "our people see one of the Creator's greatest powers. The sun is the great life-giver and sustainer of earthly existence. Take away its heat, and in three days we should be a mass of ice. We worship not the sun, but see the Creator through its life-giving rays, and when we see the sun we know that God is near."

"I have ever been an admirer of the great orb of day," said Constantine, "therefore, I set apart a day for the worship of the sun, and call it Sunday. But I will worship the sun no more, nor anything short of the Creator. And now the priests, knowing the reverence for Sunday, are taking hold of that feeling, and beginning to set another day apart and assert that they do so because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week."

"This is what I came to tell you, noble Emperor," said Benoni. "The holy ones desired me to come here and use my efforts to stop the advance of idolatry."

"Then is Christianity idolatry, Benoni?" inquired Ivena.

"If Christ be not God, then truly, Christianity is idolatry," answered the Prince. "And if Jesus rose not from the dead, then He is not God, but man only."

And as he uttered these words, Athanasius joined the group. His brow was dark with anger, for he had overheard Benoni's reply to the Queen, but trying to overcome this feeling, he said:

"Prince Benoni, whatever you may say in your own land or in Savelona, you should not forget that you are now in a Christian country, and in the presence of a Christian Emperor, and that such language is blasphemy, and an offence against the State."

The Prince was not alarmed at the hard words of Athanasius. He knew the private views of the Emperor; besides he had searched the records, and studied the histories of the times of Christ, and knew there was no outside confirmation of the resurrection from the dead. He therefore answered:

"I was not aware that it was a crime to state the result of my search amongst the ancient records, and my reading of the histories of the times when Jesus was crucified. I repeat, and do so boldly and fearlessly, that there is not a shadow of evidence in support of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. None of the writings of the first century, or subsequently, have mentioned such a thing. On the other hand, Celsus and others have distinctly asserted to the contrary. Jesus promised to appear to his persecutors, but appeared not to one of them. He failed, therefore, to keep His promise; and if He rose not from the dead He is not Divinity, for that

was the only sign He promised those who put Him to death."

Athanasius looked contemptuously upon Benoni, as he said:

" 'Get thee behind me Satan,' " And taking the Emperor aside he endeavored to prevail upon Constantine to accompany him to a Council of the Church.

" No," said the Emperor, " these are friends of mine and I desire to show them the city I have built. Pray have me excused."

" Then do not let your friends talk blasphemy," said Athanasius, " for there are many who can hear your conversation and it will harm the Christian faith."

" Harm or no harm," angrily replied the Emperor, " we will converse as we please without any priest between us to say us nay. Benoni has come from Savelona to converse with me on this subject and I intend to hear him."

" Methinks, noble Emperor," said Athanasius, " you had better turn him over to the Council, we will wring the truth from him."

And as Athanasius thus spake, a malignant look came into his face, and he appeared as though nothing could be better than to put the Prince to the torture, for uttering views so different from the decrees of the Councils of the Church.

The Emperor looked angrily upon Athanasius when he made his request, and as Constantine turned away from the Priest, he said:

" Never, Athanasius, shall any friend of mine be turned over to your hateful Councils for giving utterance to the results of his search for truth. This may be the

result in years to come, when men's consciences are tied fast down by the mother Church, and when men, aye, and perhaps kings, too, will have to bow the knee and humbly supplicate to bishops for their crowns and spiritual life. But never in my time, Athanasius. Never!"

And thus saying, the Emperor turned on his heel and left the Priest. Athanasius stood and gazed after the three, who continued their walk, discoursing as they passed onward.

The Priest fell into a reverie, and as he stood musing, he said:

"This Constantine has changed his views. He was obedient to the bishops and his mother as long as it answered his purposes, but now he has achieved greater power than Emperor ever before possessed he is bad to manage, and such talk as this with Benoni will do much harm. We must devise some plan for silencing this fool of a Zoroastrian. Surely the decrees of the Church, sanctioned by the Emperor himself, will reach the blasphemer. I must away and confer with Eusebius on the matter."

And he did so, but the aged Bishop had more worldly wisdom than the impulsive and hot-tempered Athanasius and merely said:

"Let matters slide easily, Athanasius. The Prince and Queen will soon return to Savelona. It will never do to raise any discussion on the questions raised by the Parsee.

Thus argued the great writer of church history, and none knew better than this Bishop where the weak points existed, and the best means to pursue to firmly engraff the new faith on the old religious stem.

And matters came about as Eusebius had predicted.

The Emperor and Benoni had many private chats, but there was no public discussion, and the outside religious world were kept in ignorance as before the Prince arrived.

All matters had now advanced so that the expedition was ready to depart, and Benoni and Ivena sought the Emperor to say a last farewell. Constantine received them graciously, sent his warmest remembrances to Serapta, and then, as he bade the Prince farewell, he said:

"I wish you every success in your expedition, Benoni; and when you have succeeded in finding Serapta, and placing Ivena on her throne, hasten hither, and if I am still alive I shall be pleased to renew our interviews, for I note you have been as I am, a seeker after truth and God. But, Benoni, something tells me I shall not be long on earth. My course is well nigh run, and I feel the emptiness of life, and the uncertainty beyond."

"Be not sad nor weary, noble Emperor," replied the Prince. "To die is as natural as to be born, both are in the plan of the great Creator, and He knows what is best."

"I sometimes feel thus, Benoni," answered the Emperor, "but when I look back I see the spectres of my ambition haunting me, and this I fear they will do as long as life endures. My son Crispus, noble youth, stands forth and accuses me of mis-conception of his designs. Alas, why cannot man see into the hearts of others, and discern what is true and what is false. But, Benoni, I will not send you away sad. I will hope and pray for forgiveness, and should we ever meet again I trust my mind will be happier. If not I look to meet you in the further life, and there renew our friendly converse. Farewell."

And thus the Prince and Queen parted with the Emperor of the Roman world, and they realized that nothing short of a peaceful religious life, and trust and hope in the great Creator, would give constant happiness.

"It is very sad, Ivena," said the Prince, when they were alone, "to see the emptiness of all worldly things. One would have thought that if ever there was a happy mortal it would be the great conqueror, Constantine. But his very ambition and success have proved the things to mar his peace."

Thus conversed Benoni and Ivena as the ship bore them forth through the great sea on their way to Savelona. They had been drawn nearer together during their sojourn with Benoni's friends. The wild passion of the Queen had subsided into that of the affection and esteem of a sister. She could now converse with the Prince without the wild throbings of her heart. She had tested his devotion to his wife and knew how deeply he loved her. Both expected to find the Princess on the Sacred Island, along with Monica, for they had not heard of the arrival of Serapta at Savelona, and the ship did not proceed quick enough for the anxious husband. They often conversed of the Princess, and the happy hours she and Benoni had passed together on the island, and the Prince was pleased to note that Ivena could do so without exhibiting any feelings of jealousy. He often spoke of Orlando, and observed that the Queen held the young chief in high esteem, and gradually a happy smile came into her face, and a gladsome glance, when reference was made to him who had been so long devoted to her. The Queen was pleased to hear the high appreciation and terms of esteem spoken by the Prince, for Benoni was

her model of perfection, and she knew she should ever love him; but as Orlando was spoken of, she gradually began to dwell more lovingly upon his worth, and to think of him as one to esteem and love, and if they should have met now, the Queen would have listened to his suit.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## PLAYING AT CROSS-PURPOSES — LOVE'S VICTORY.

Not many days had passed since the Queen and Benoni had sailed with the Roman army, before a vessel anchored in the harbor of Constantinople. The sails were all gone, and it bore the signs of having encountered rough gales. The captain was a rough, weather-beaten man, who appeared as though the sea was his native home. The men under his command were strong, hearty and healthy, and looked around upon the Roman shipping with eyes of curiosity, as though they had never seen such noble crafts before.

They had not long anchored before a Roman soldier went on deck, and, addressing the captain, inquired from whence they hailed, and whom they sought.

"We bring the Princess Serapta, a noble Roman lady, who comes hither in search of her lord and friends, the King and Queen of Harva. She is niece to your great Emperor, and we claim his protection and aid."

"And you shall have it, good captain," replied the Roman inspector of ships. "But, alas, the Prince Benoni has but recently sailed away to bring his wife to Constantinople, and now you say she is in the ship with you. Truly, life is full of cross-purposes."

"Speak not so loud, worthy Roman," said the captain of the ship. "The Princess will hear you, and she has been afraid of these tidings during the voyage. But I will call the Priest, Planos, and he will break the news to her gently."

Ere he could do so, however, Coppia, the maid who accompanied the Princess in her flight, came on deck,



THEY SAW A HUGE PROCESSION, LED BY YOUNG CHORISTER-EUNUCHS.

See p. 369.



and she undertook to inform her mistress of the sad news.

'The Lord's will be done, Coppia,' reverently answered Serapta. "He orders all things for the best, and I must bear this great trial resignedly."

Thereupon, the Princess prepared to leave the ship, along with the Roman soldier, who undertook to see her and friends to her parents, who were staying in the city.

"And are the King and Queen of Harva well?" inquired Serapta. "How I have longed to see them once more these many years. Here are my good friends, Planos and Niseba, without whose aid I should never again have seen Constantinople."

And she introduced these two aged men to the Roman inspector of ships, and the party proceeded quickly to the palace of her father and mother.

"Ah, my beloved Serapta," said the mother, falling on her daughter's neck and embracing her, and shedding tears of joy. "How dearly we have longed these many years to see you. Truly, the Almighty has been good to spare us to this day."

And the good old King also kissed his daughter, and the old Priest and gate-keeper and Coppia were not forgotten in the general rejoicing.

"These, dear father," said the Princess, introducing her companions, "are they who have saved my life and brought me here in safety. I commend them to your kind aid."

"And they shall have it," said Constantine, who had just entered and witnessed the introduction. "Let them consider themselves my guests. But you are too late to

stop Benoni. He started a few days ago to bring you here, Serapta."

While they thus conversed, and heard the exploits of Coppia and the aged priest and gate-keeper in Serapta's behalf, a messenger entered, asking for the Emperor.

"I am here, Roman, what wouldst thou with me?" and as Constantine spake, the messenger bowed himself gracefully, and said:

"I am commissioned by the noble Marcel to seek an audience with thee, noble Emperor. Where shall he attend thee, for his mission appears urgent?"

"Bring him here," replied Constantine, "and I will await his coming. Truly, all are running after each other, and I can show the young soldier the one he seek's. But where is Mona? She must not be absent I trow, or Marcel's ardor will be dampened."

"I am here, noble Emperor," said Mona, and her cheeks showed that the scene was far from indifferent to her.

"You must reward the young man, Mona," said Constantine. "I doubt not your sister ran away from him to balk him of his reward. But it must not be so, fair Mona, for he started with the best intentions as I can vouch."

"And would have executed his mission faithfully," said Serapta, "had I not urged him to go to Savelona for Bishop Angelus to baptize my child. Alas, the babe had nearly had a baptism of fire."

And as she spoke she pressed the beloved boy to her heart and recounted the incidents leading up to the fire, and the steps taken by her enemies to capture her.

"I vow my best shall be done," said the Emperor,

"to write out this absurd theory of the punishment of unbaptized infants from the Christian statute-book."

Marcel was not long in reaching this happy group. The Emperor received him most kindly, for he was a great favorite, and Constantine determined to see him united to Mona, notwithstanding the Dowager-Empress had done all she could to poison her niece's mind against the young soldier on account of his nonprofession of Christianity.

"Welcome back to Constantinople," said the Emperor, addressing himself to Marcel. "You see we can produce her for whom you went in search."

Marcel was greatly surprised to see Serapta. The prevailing opinion in Savelona was that the Princess had perished in the flames.

When Serapta heard of this, she was greatly troubled. "Alas," she said, "and is this so? Oh, my dear husband, how his heart will be torn with grief. First he will find the island deserted; and then, when he reaches Savelona, this sad story will be told to him. Oh, I must go to him, noble Emperor; I must start at once."

And she laid her head on her mother's shoulder and wept as though her heart would break.

Marcel looked lovingly upon Mona, and was the first to speak.

"I will go, noble Emperor, with your permission," he said. "Be comforted, dear Princess, all that man can do shall be done; and here is Orlando, come in search of the Queen Ivena, and intending to re-instate her on the throne."

"She has returned with the Prince Benoni," answered Constantine. "I have fitted out an expedition with the

object of protecting the Queen and assisting her back to her throne."

Orlando stepped forward, and throwing himself on his knee before the Emperor, thanked Constantine warmly for befriending the Queen.

"I require no thanks, young soldier," cheerfully answered the Emperor." I have but done my duty to one in whom I took a personal interest. Besides," continued Constantine, with a side glance at Orlando, "the divine right of queens as well as kings must be upheld. There is no telling how soon the priests will rule."

"A priest has longed ruled in Savelona," answered Orlando, "but his reign is nearly over now. He has taken to Christianity, and must rest content with spiritual influence."

And here Angelus came forward, with his wife, Monica, and they were presented to the Emperor. Then the Duke de Bismantua and his wife, the Queen Costanza, were also introduced, and Constantine received them graciously.

"I thank you, noble Emperor," said Costanza, "for your kindness to my sister. She is more fitted for a Queen than I am; and gladly will I exchange my crown in Savelona for a peaceful home here, or in Kirma, with my husband."

"You are right," answered the Emperor. "A peaceful life with those you love is far preferable to a crown with discord, and what monarch can enjoy rest and repose. These and ambition are never companions."

Thus spake the conqueror near the close of his great and important reign. He had lived to realize the empti-

ness of all earthly things, and that a peaceful life is far happier than all the world can give.

Marcel and Mona were overjoyed at being allowed to converse alone together, and the young soldier renewed his vows of constancy.

"You have ever been in my thoughts," he said, drawing the fair girl near to him and kissing her fondly. "And now, my love, I trust you will be mine ere I depart again for Savelona."

"And must you go, Marcel?" she said, looking upon him sorrowfully. "Will no other hand but yours restore the crown to Ivena?"

"My word is pledged, dear Mona," he said, "and I know that you would have me keep faith with those I have promised. Orlando is a noble fellow and I desire to see him united to the one he has loved so long and well."

"Then are Ivena and Orlando lovers?" inquired Mona.

"He loves her deeply, Mona," answered the young soldier, "and in the end I trust he will reap his reward, for he is worthy of the highest queen, and Ivena must ultimately yield to such devotion."

And from this subject, the lovers passed backward to themselves, and Marcel obtained Mona's consent to their union, provided the Emperor and her parents consented.

"I have no fear for the Emperor," said Marcel, "for I can see that he is favorable to our marriage, and I trust that your parents will not refuse. I will speak with them to-morrow, Mona, and then you will assent to our union before I leave for Savelona. I shall still reach there by the time the first expedition arrives, as they have

to go round by the Sacred Island. Besides, they will wait for Orlando before a decisive battle is fought. He is now a power in the land, I assure you."

Caius Pompora hastened with the letters given him by Spenata, and his debts were paid. He felt no scruples in using these letters, although he had not been able to prevent the marriage of the Duke and Costanza.

"It was no fault of mine," reasoned the young Roman. "The deed was done ere the Queen left the palace. Why then should I abstain from my reward? I have taken the journey and watched according to my bargain, and now I will report the position of matters to Spenata."

And he despatched a special messenger to the Archbishop with the following communication:

"I have watched over your daughter and the Duke during the voyage to Constantinople, but they were married in the palace at Sordello by Bishop Angelus, and Monica has come with them. They are now under the protection of the Emperor Constantine, and staying with the King and Queen of Kirma. Unless you are prepared to do battle against the power of Rome it will be useless to send an army to compel the Queen Costanza's return. But you will shortly hear of a Roman army in your kingdom, for Queen Ivena, with Benoni, and a legion from here, have embarked to assist in re-instating Ivena on the throne. I send this communication to enable you to take such steps as you may determine; and I remain here, awaiting your further wishes.

"CAIUS POMPORA."

This despatch having been forwarded, Caius returned to his usual haunts and enjoyments, as in days gone by, and was soon again involved in debt.

"What are the odds, so long as I am happy," philosophically said the young soldier. "Life was given for enjoyment, and if I do not get it when I am young, I shall not be able when I am old. Here goes for a short life and a merry one."

Many days had not elapsed before another ship anchored

in the harbor, and the physician, Huesca, landed with Hypathia and Maria, and made their way speedily to the Queen Costanza and the Duke.

"I am sent," said Huesca, with a pleasing smile, "to compel you, noble Queen, to return to your subjects. You have led us such a chase, or we should have reached you before you landed. Are you prepared to return with me?"

The Queen, looking with loving gaze on the Duke, replied:

"I have given my liberty to another. The Duke Bismantua is the one to whom you must address your inquiry." Then turning graciously to Hypathia and Maria, she continued:

"So you are the powerful army sent by my father to force Queen Costanza to return and take up her crown of thorns? Methinks, my father little knew his daughter to imagine I should so easily be led back to bondage."

"Nay, noble Queen," replied Hypathia, bowing the knee to Costanza, "we did but our duty in following you and seeing that you come not to harm. And with us came a great number of soldiers to enforce your father's commands."

At this intimation, the Queen looked anxiously towards the Duke, and he, anticipating her communication, said:

"Be not alarmed, dear Costanza, you are safe here. The Romans feared not to allow the court physician and the maids of honor to visit you, but before the soldiers come near here an order will be necessary from the Emperor. Rest satisfied, my love, that no harm can come to you; and as to the physician and your maids

of honor, they are your subjects still, and you have but to command them to remain in this palace and they must obey."

And as the Duke uttered these words, it was with a smile, and the court officials of Savelona realized that the imprisonment would not be irksome, for the Duke continued:

"But, Huesca, while you and the maids of honor are in this city you must see the sights, and then, returning to Savelona, you can take with you all the latest improvements of civilization. Whether the Queen returns with you or not, must rest with her, but if I know her heart, and I think I do, it will be to prefer a peaceful home in this Empire to the uncertainty of Savelona. Is not that so my love?"

"Wherever you are, Bismantua," answered the Queen, "there shall I remain, and for your love I would forego my crown, even though it sparkled with more valuable diamonds than it does now. Yes, Bismantua, our home shall be with your people, and Ivena shall have her own again. But you, good physician, must remain with me; and I should be pleased if Hypathia and Mária will do so. Yet, to each of you, I give full liberty to remain here or return to Savelona."

Hypathia expressed the desire to return, but Huesca and Maria stated they were prepared to remain with the Queen.

"My life, noble Queen," said Huesca, "cannot be long, and as I have never interfered with State affairs, my presence in Savelona is not necessary in the great contest that must ensue. The kingdom is likely to be rent with war. The King of Sepania, finding himself de-

ceived, will readily invent some excuse for a contest of power with Savelona. Then, the Archbishop will not willingly assent to Ivena resuming her throne, and there will be civil war. Thanks, noble Queen, I will remain with you, and if my long studies can be of service to you I shall feel myself fully rewarded."

Marcel took an early opportunity of speaking to the Emperor on the subject nearest to his heart. Constantine heard him courteously, and then replied:

"I give my assent willingly, Marcel. You richly deserve the hand of Mona for your gallant efforts on her sister's behalf, and, as I find Mona looks favorably upon you, I trust her parents will also assent to your union. They would never have had any objection but for my mother calling you an infidel, an atheist, and heretic. Yet, Marcel, I have lived long enough to discover that these are idle words, nay, I may say wicked ones, when applied to such as you. Therefore, marry Mona, and may you ever be happy."

The young soldier thanked Constantine; and then, armed with such high consent, sought the King and Queen of Harva, and pressed his suit.

"But for the Dowager-Empress, Helena," said Mona's mother, "we should never have felt any difficulty in entrusting our dear child to your keeping. She, however, being Mona's aunt, we feel bound to consult her."

"But," replied Marcel, "she is prejudiced against me because I do not profess Christianity, and I cannot do so entertaining the views of that religion that I do. The Emperor has given his approval, and I trust to have your assent."

The King of Harva, looking with admiration upon the manly form of the young soldier, replied:

"We will not permit ideas of religion to interfere between you and Mona. You have earned your reward and as the Emperor has consented, so do we; let the nuptials take place before your departure."

And thus it was arranged and the Empress-Mother was not consulted, and Marcel had the supreme happiness of being married to Mona, the woman of his choice.

This being accomplished, Marcel entered upon speedy preparations for his departure, and was soon off, along with Orlando, to bring back Benoni to his wife, and Orlando was eager to meet with Ivena, whom he loved so truly.

They visited the Sacred Island and saw the lovely spot where Benoni and Serapta passed so many happy years, and it was truly a paradise. But Benoni and Ivena had passed forward to Savelona. There they found the court attendants anxiously looking for the Queen's return, for messengers had preceded with tidings of their expedition. Yet there were no signs of war, only the shadow of death hanging over the palace. Ivena's father was near his end, and received his daughter graciously.

He had received the dispatch from Caius Pompora, the sad news of which hastened his death. Thus it came to pass that the one on whom Spenata relied to carry along his nefarious plans, was compelled to send him the information of the secret marriage of the Duke and Costanza, and of the approach of a Roman army. This news, so unexpected, like a two-edged sword, pierced his heart with fatal results. Yet, strange as it may seem his great cry was for his little Costanza. "Oh,

where is my angel-child?" was his hourly cry. In vain Ivena tried to cheer him. He appeared to dwell only on the time when they were in Britain and when Costanza sported around him in childish glee. "Will you not come to me, Costanza?" was his constant cry; and thus he passed away, looking forward to meeting the little one he had really and truly loved.

After his death, Ivena was re-instated as Queen of Savelona, and in due time there came a joyful day—a jubilee—throughout the kingdom. It was the marital day of Orlando and the Queen.

The noble Marcel returned to his beloved Mona at Constantinople, accompanied by Prince Benoni, who there met, after the long and sorrowful separation, his faithful wife Serapta, and to both of whom there came anew that sweet blending of happy life, which is always the reward of fidelity and love.

THE END

PUBLISHED BY  
**RHODES & McCLURE PUBLISHING CO.**  
93 Washington Street, . CHICAGO.

All handsomely bound in the best English and American cloths, with full silver embossed side and back stamp; uniform in style of binding. Together making a handsome library, or, separately, making handsome center table volumes.

Price, \$1.00 each. Sent postpaid.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S STORIES AND SPEECHES; in one volume, complete; new 1895 edition; handsomely illustrated; 473 pages. Containing the many witty, pointed and unequalled stories as told by Mr. Lincoln, including Early life stories; Professional life stories; White House and War stories; also presenting the full text of the popular Speeches of Mr. Lincoln on the great questions of the age, including his "First Political Speech;" "Rail Splitting Speech;" "Great Debate with Douglas;" and his Wonderful Speech at Gettysburg; etc., etc.; and including his two great Inaugurals, with many grand illustrations. An instructive and valuable Book,

**M**OODY'S ANECDOTES; 210 pages. Containing several hundred interesting stories, told by the great evangelist, D. L. Moody, in his wonderful work in Europe and America. Hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold. Illustrated with excellent engravings of Messrs. Moody, Sankey, Whittle and Bliss. "A book of anecdotes which have thrilled hundreds of thousands."—*Pittsburg Banner*.



SAM JONES' SERMONS, Vol. I; 346 pages. SAM JONES' SERMONS, Vol. II; 340 pages. Sam Jones is pronounced "one of the most sensational preachers in the world, and yet among the most effective." His sermons are characterized by clearness, point and great common sense, including "hits" that ring like guns. Printed in large type, and illustrated with engravings of Sam Jones and Sam Small; complete in two volumes.

SAM JONES' ANECDOTES; 300 pages. An exceedingly interesting and entertaining volume, containing the many telling and effective stories told by Mr. Jones in his sermons. They strike in all directions, and always impart good moral lessons that cannot be misunderstood. Adapted for the young and old. A book which everybody can enjoy.



MISTAKES OF INGERSOLL; and His Answers complete; newly revised popular (1895) edition; illustrated; 482 pages. Containing the full replies of Prof. Swing, Judge Black, J. Munro Gibson, D. D., Chaplain McCabe, Bishop Cheney, Dr. Thomas, Dr. MacLagan, Dr. Goodwin and other eminent Scholars, to Ingersoll's Lectures on the "Mistakes of Moses," "Skulls," "What Shall We Do to be Saved?" and "Thomas Paine," to which is appended in full these Ingersoll lectures and his replies. A fair presentation of the full discussion.



GREAT SPEECHES OF COL. R. G. INGERSOLL; complete; newly revised (1895) edition; 409 pages. Containing the many eloquent, timely, practical speeches of this most gifted orator and statesman; including his recent matchless "Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln"; "Speech on the Declaration of Independence"; "To the Farmers on Farming"; "Funeral Oration at his Brother's Grave," etc. etc., fully and handsomely illustrated.

## Standard Publications, \$1.00 each, bound in Cloth.



WIT, WISDOM AND ELOQUENCE OF COL. R. G. INGERSOLL; newly revised popular (1895) edition; illustrated; 336 pages. Containing the remarkable Witticisms, terse, pungent and sarcastic sayings, and eloquent extracts on popular themes, from Ingersoll's Speeches; a very entertaining volume.

GEMS OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY; 300 pages. A choice selection of wise, eloquent extracts, from Talmage, Beecher, Moody, Spurgeon, Guthrie and Parker, forming a volume that keenly interests. A good gift and center table book. Illustrated.



TEN YEARS A COW-BOY; 471 pages. A full and vivid description of frontier life, including romance, adventure, and all the varied experiences incident to a life on the plains as cow-boy, stock owner, rancher, etc., together with articles on cattle and sheep raising, how to make money, description of the plains, etc., etc. Copiously Illustrated.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT; 310 pages. A truthful, instructive, pleasing and poetical presentation of Biblical stories, history and gospel truth; fully and handsomely illustrated from the world-renowned artist Gustav Dore; by E U. Cook: the whole forming an exceedingly interesting and entertaining poetical Bible. One of the handsomest volumes ever issued in Chicago.



GEMS OF POETRY; 407 pages; finely illustrated. Contains a very choice and varied selection of our most popular, beautiful and time-honored poems, written by the poets of all ages and climes. A magnificent gift book for a friend; a splendid book for the holidays; appropriate for a birthday or wedding present; a fine center table book, interesting to all.

THE FIRST MORTGAGE. A finely written and fully and most elegantly illustrated volume of 300 pages, in which all trials, difficulties and sorrows of life are represented as the result of a mortgage. How this mortgage is finally and fully cancelled. A book at once entertaining and elevating.

E VILS OF THE CITIES; By T. DeWitt Talmage, D. D.; 530 pages. The author, in company with the proper detectives, visited many of the most vile and wicked places in New York City and Brooklyn, ostensibly looking for a thief, but in reality taking notes for a series of discourses published in this volume, which contains a full and graphic description of what he saw and the lessons drawn therefrom. The Doctor has also extended his observations to the "Summer Resorts," "Watering Places," Races, etc., etc., all of which are popularized from his standpoint in this volume. Handsomely illustrated and decidedly interesting.

T ALMAGE IN THE HOLY LAND; 322 pages. The Palestine Sermons of T. DeWitt Talmage, delivered during his tour of the Holy Land. Including graphic descriptions of Sacred Places, Vivid Delineations of Gospel Truths, interesting local reminiscences, etc., etc., by his visit to the many places made sacred by the personal presence of Jesus Christ, and the great pens of Biblical characters and writers. Copiously illustrated.

# FOR THE DEAF.

# THE AUDIPHONE

**An Instrument that Enables Deaf Persons to Hear Ordinary Conversation Readily through the Medium of the Teeth, and Many of those Born Deaf and Dumb to Hear and Learn to Speak.**

**INVENTED BY RICHARD S. RHODES, CHICAGO.**

**Medal Awarded at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago,**

The Audiphone is a new instrument made of a peculiar composition, possessing the property of gathering the faintest sounds (somewhat similar to a telephone diaphragm), and conveying them to the auditory nerve, through the medium of the teeth. *The external ear has nothing whatever to do in hearing with this wonderful instrument.*

Thousands are in use by those who would not do without them for any consideration. It has enabled doctors and lawyers to resume practice, teachers to resume teaching, mothers to hear the voices of their children, thousands to hear their minister, attend concerts and theatres, and engage in general conversation. Music is heard perfectly with it when without it not a note could be distinguished. It is convenient to carry and to use. Ordinary conversation can be heard with ease. In most cases deafness is not detected.

Full instructions will be sent with each instrument. The Audiphone is patented throughout the civilized world.

## **: : PRICE : :**

Conversational, small size,	-	-	-	\$3 00
Conversational, medium size,	-	-	-	3 00
Concert size,	-	-	-	5 00

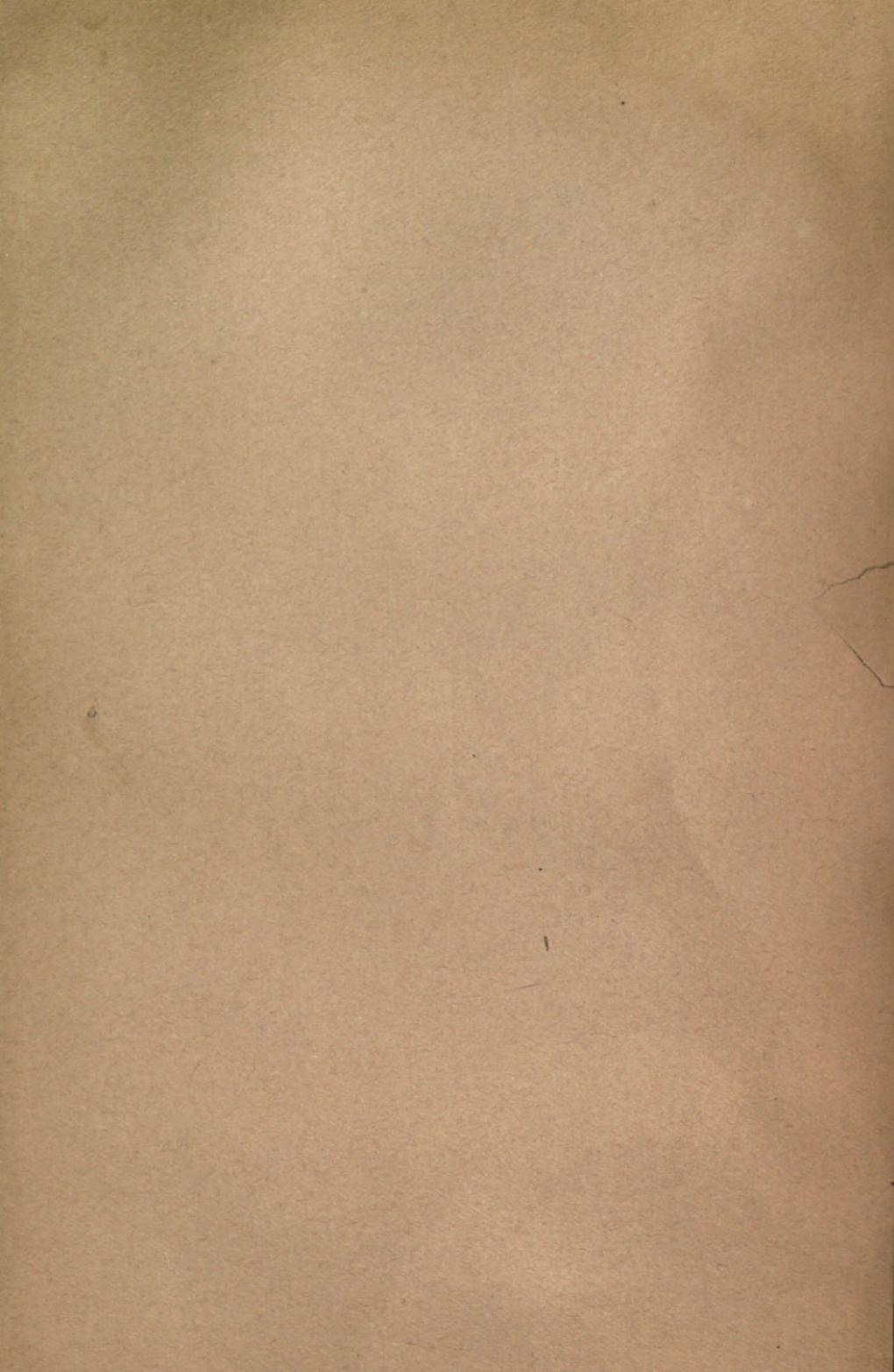
The Audiphone will be sent to any address, on receipt of price, by

**RHODES & MCCLURE PUBLISHING CO.,**

**Agents for the World.**

**93 Washington St.,**

**CHICAGO, ILL.**



University of California  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY  
Return this material to the library  
from which it was borrowed.

REG'D LD-URL  
LD URL JUL 09 1990  
JUN 25 1990

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 126 431 6



